Speaking The Subject: A Discourse Analysis Of Undergraduate Seminar Practice

Thesis

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Speaking the Subject: a discourse analysis of undergraduate student seminar practice

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Speaking the Subject: A discourse analysis of undergraduate student seminar practice

Abstract

This dissertation explores talk in an undergraduate seminar context. Research design was informed by an interpretive, ethnomethodological approach to understanding talk as a situated activity. A series of *student-led seminars* were audio recorded; students and staff were interviewed and post-seminar group debriefing sessions were held. The data was subsequently transcribed and analysed using a functional systemic linguistics and discourse analysis approach. Analysis identified structural and linguistic elements of seminar talk and links between language, identity, power and status was explored through an analysis of the discursive processes at work in the seminar events. An heuristic model of the seminar as a socio-pedagogic space, a site of hegemonic struggle, was used to aid concept development.

A number of issues emerged within an interpretative framework of the cognitive, interpersonal and textual elements of seminar talk. In the analysis of the textual meta-function of seminars, how complexity is achieved and how conversational moves are patterned, seminars appear to constitute a hybrid talk variety, a highly unusual textual form in which participants need to learn how to participate.

Tensions were found between the social and the cognitive elements of seminars. Student participants tend to use the seminar to achieve social effects, identifying and maintaining interpersonal relationships. The collaborative discourse strategies they employ constrain other opportunities for achieving educational outcomes. The learning which does take place is more likely to be related to personal and skills development than to learning about the academic subject. Students deployed a range of heteroglossic discursive strategies to practice their skills in forming ideas, marshalling evidence and constructing argument. The discursive practices of seminar events foreground tensions between socially situated identities.

The research identifies a number of areas for improving practice including: enhanced specification of seminar processes and outcomes; embedding opportunities for preparation and critical reflection.; teaching the subject of communication and foregrounding understandings of the discursive practices at work in seminars so as to empower individual learners.

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"..everything I said, because everything I thought, was in conscious mimicry of the people who rule us. We did not necessarily admit this, but that is what was always in their minds when they listened to us. It amused them mostly. Sometimes it irritated them. It still does. Never could they listen to us and forget that we were a subject inferior people. The more idiomatic we tried to be the more naïve our thinking sounded, because we were thinking in a foreign language that we had never properly considered in relation to our own."

Paul Scott (1973:255) *The Jewel in the Crown*

"I just feel very awkward, speaking ... I just feel overawed by it all".

Holly, Tourism Student (June 2001)

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Speaking the Subject: a discourse analysis of undergraduate student seminar practice

Foreword:

For many students, the language of higher education is a foreign one. It has to be learned. It has to be practised, through reading, writing, listening and speaking. This research focuses on speech and does so by exploring the talk of undergraduate students recorded while they were participating in seminars.

Why carry out research into seminars? One answer is because - curiously - there is little contemporary work in the field, even though seminars are used extensively as a teaching, learning and assessment practice in higher education. The National Committee of enquiry into Higher Education, The Dearing Report, (NCIHE 1997) found that traditional teaching methods still predominate in higher education and that seminars and tutorials were experienced by 91% of learners, the highest proportion, in their survey (NCIHE 1997:35). So ubiquitous are seminars that their usefulness seems not to be questioned, unlike the lecture which has come in for criticism of didacticism and for reinforcing models of learning as transmission and learners as passive 'empty vessels' (Fry et al 1999:83), the seminar has escaped comparable scrutiny.

Unlike many other tutors, I had no seminar experience as a student, and yet still felt they constituted 'appropriate' higher education teaching practice and had used them extensively in my own teaching. When asked, learners were apparently beguiled by the word; it conveyed a legitimation of studentship - only 'real' students involve themselves in seminars - and this marginally offset the terror they felt about 'presenting a paper'. In course validation events, seminars appeared as an enlightened pedagogic practice, encouraging deep learning and critical reflection, through the practice of reasoned argument and with the tutor facilitating the equal involvement of all participants. However, staff room talk was dominated by colleagues' berating their learners for being ill prepared and for 'non participation' in

seminars, leaving the tutor to lead, and often force, minimal debate. How could learners use seminars to develop their skills of analysis and synthesis of argument if they were sitting mute and not participating? There appeared to be a schism between an ideal of seminar practice and what was actually happening.

It was against this background that I began my research journey to find out what goes on in seminars. What type of talk is seminar talk? Are learners engaged in academic discourse, learning about their subject or learning how to debate with their peers? Are they learning a particularly arcane form of performance art within a ritualistic rite of passage? What did they think they were learning and did this differ from the views of their tutors?

Whilst the outcome of my research does not offer definitive answers to these questions, it does contribute to exposing the seminar in its diverse forms and offers insights into better seminar practice.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

SPEAKING IN CLASS

Student talk occupies an ambiguous and contested space within the classroom. Research on classroom interaction suggests that for student talk to be legitimate it has to be sanctioned by the teacher, often taking place during teacher-initiated sessions, where teachers ask questions, learners answer, and teachers provide feedback – the classic I-R-F (initiation, response, feedback) structure (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975, Edwards and Mercer, 1987:9;). Educational policy and learning theories have however supported the importance of student talk in the learning process (Piaget 1926; Vygotsky 1986) and of oral communication skills as a core competence (in schools) or an employability skill (in post-16 and higher education). While there has been much research into pupil talk in primary, and to some extent, secondary classrooms, little attention has been paid to student talk in higher education. This mirrors an historic tendency for research into pedagogic practice to be undervalued in higher education, but it also reflects an academic community which prizes written modes of communication. However, from Socratic questioning onwards dialogue has taken a central role in supporting learning in higher education (see Brockbank and McGill 1998). From the Oxbridge tutorial to the red-brick (or plate-glass and concrete) seminar, talking has a place in learning and yet that place is often undefined and ambiguous.

Higher educational institutions have only recently begun to make explicit their strategies to promote learning, or indeed to identify content and outcomes for undergraduate courses, through subject benchmarking prompted by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Within this benchmarking, the seminar is identified as a key teaching and learning method. It has been the traditional place where student-to-student talk is promoted, under the watchful direction of a tutor. Here, student ideas, often pre-formulated in written papers, are aired for discussion, and the language of academia is practised by new entrants to the academy. As such this model of practice makes an implicit assumption that talk has an important role to play in the learning

process in higher education with the seminar the key site where talk is promoted and practised. However, when it comes to the outcomes of higher education, talk occupies a peripheral and inferior role to written communication. Where seminars are used as a vehicle for assessment, it is the written paper that is assessed not the debate. Where oral skills do form part of assessment, they are usually delivered through a formal presentation. For all these assumptions, it is important to explore how far the traditional seminar is a means of supporting learning through the practice of talking.

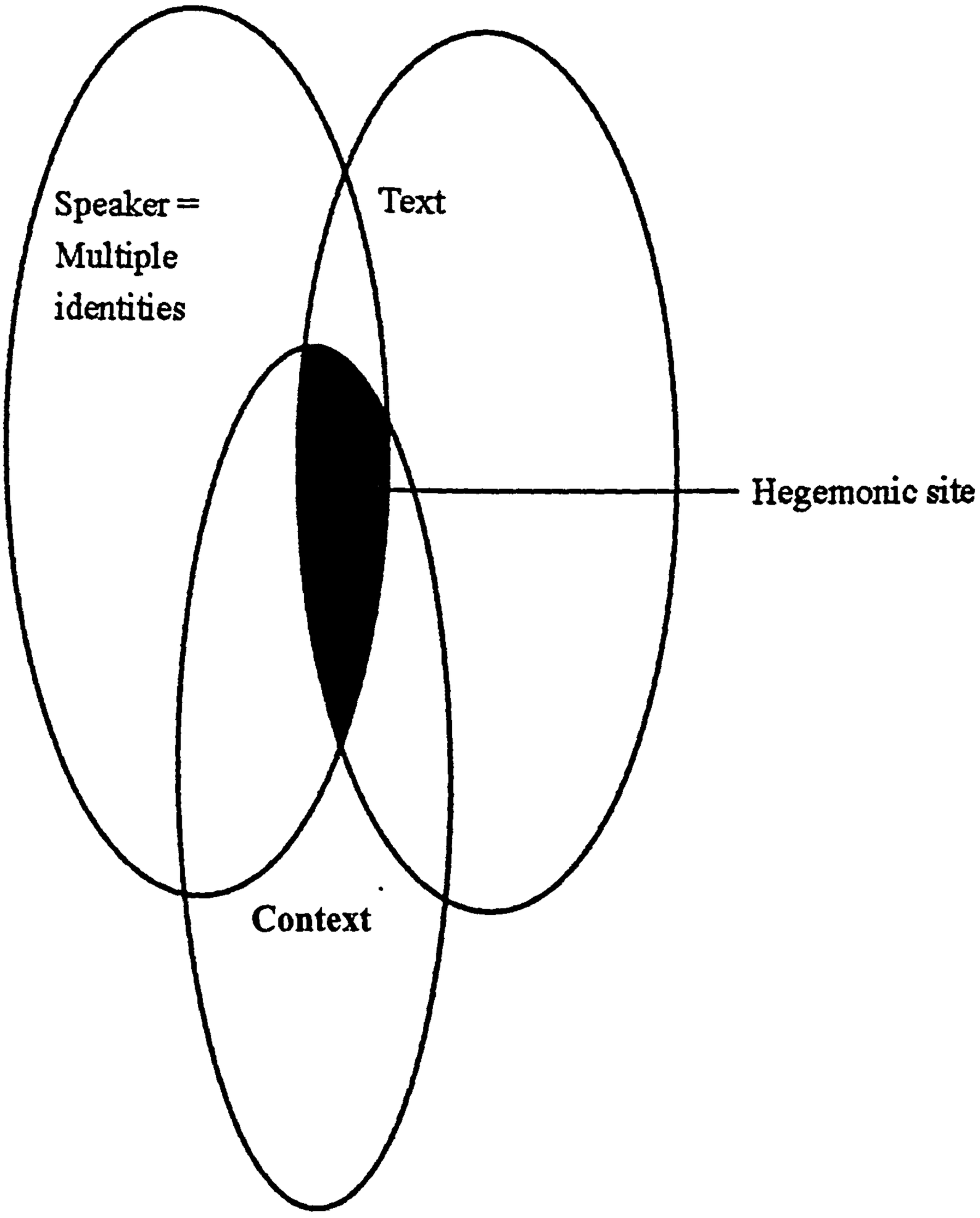
RESEARCH PLANNING

Since any research constitutes a process, a journey, it is important to identify initial thoughts and underlying assumptions that inform the research design, even though these may be challenged as the research progresses. The original research plan did not include a hypothesis to be tested. However, in discussions with my supervisor I realised that I was working with an implicit hypothesis, a personal standpoint. This was that undergraduate seminars constitute a particular sub-genre of academic discourse and that through the value attached to the demonstration of particular forms of cultural and linguistic capital, seminars can help to reproduce social inequalities. In reflecting on this, I realised that what drew me to this research topic was my interest in *what* was being learned during seminars. In seminars the management of the learning space is, to some extent, handed over to the learner who provides the content, constructs the argument and directs discussion – potentially an empowering activity. Seminars provide learners, as a group of peers, with the opportunity to share their emerging ideas and understandings of complex issues, learning from and supporting each other.

However, learner empowerment is likely to be modified by the classroom setting which carries with it expectations of behaviour, modes of address and discourse styles as well as being part of the meta-discourse of the institution and beyond. The teacher is also present, sometimes participating in the debate, at other times observing proceedings, sometimes making judgements. Learners may not have strong supportive relationships with each other, and the classroom setting may invoke more

competition than it does collaboration. Student empowerment is likely to be constrained by such factors. Although the seminar text is a meaning-making practice (Graddol 1994; Meinhof 1994) participants will not necessarily share common understanding of its meaning. Participants bring their individual backgrounds, cultures, aims and purposes to the seminar event where turn-taking patterns and moves, celebrated within sociolinguistics as a triumph of collaboration (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974) actually mark out power relationships between learners and reflect linguistic jostling for position. As such the seminar can be understood as a hegemonic site (Gramsci 1971), a site of tension, where forces of domination and resistance fight ideological battles, where power is contested and where there is interplay between different discourses. Model 1 depicts my understanding of the classroom as a hegemonic site.

Model 1.1: The classroom as hegemonic space



In asking colleagues what they thought students were learning in seminars, answers ranged from a focus on subject understanding; confidence to 'speak up' in a group; to perform competently in a way that would be appropriate for the work place. There was no collective agreement on purpose and the concept of the seminar which was articulated seemed to be multi-faceted.

In thinking through the implications of the research for my practice as a teacher I felt I needed to make explicit where I stood on the use of seminars as a teaching, learning and assessment method. I believed seminars provided a vehicle that:

- promotes student ownership of the learning environment;
- encourages discussion amongst learners;
- facilitates a more active student engagement with the subject matter;
- develops respect for different opinions;
- develops skills of debate, analysis, critical thinking and reflection;
- foregrounds the role of communication as practice;
- provides preparation for the world of work.

I was also aware that seminars are increasingly being used as a vehicle for the assessment of oral communication skills as part of the key skills agenda in HE. This is an agenda that I had to address in my role as an educational manager in a College of Further and Higher Education. Exploring aspects of the key skills debate in the literature review it was clear there were different perspectives on whether or not to embed key skills within the curriculum or to teach and assess them separately, and whether skills are indeed transferable or remain domain specific (Hyland and Johnson 1998; Havard, Hughes and Clarke 1998; Lam 1996). All of which suggested that greater understanding of the processes at work within seminars; of the perceptions of both staff and students about seminars would be of benefit to me, to other practitioners, and to the research community.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In planning the research I was making explicit a number of assumptions, supported by the initial literature review, about talk and its relationship to learning. Firstly I assumed a social-cultural dimension - that through talk individuals construct and reconstruct social worlds and their relationships with others. That participants would be engaged in this social process within the seminar.

Secondly I assumed that the social function of talk is mediated by the context in which it takes place. Talk within a classroom is likely to have particular characteristics and be subject to particular constraints and possibilities. Seminar talk is not naturally occurring, it is talk for a purpose - a particular type of academic talk. Thirdly I assumed that language has a key role in supporting learning and concept development. That through engaging in dialogue with others, individuals identify, reflect on and refine ideas and views, and that within a seminar there is likely to be evidence of this process at work.

Since I suspected that learners would be particularly fearful of the public display aspect of seminars, I was interested in exploring how they were supported and prepared for seminars and how far what was expected of them was made explicit. I also suspected that there may be a series of tensions at work in the seminar. Tension between the seminar form of interaction and its content, where the form is small group talk between peers and the content is an academic, pre-established topic. The educational setting of the seminar provides a frame where individuals are expected to demonstrate subject knowledge and to behave appropriately including using communicative strategies suitable for educational interaction (Mehan 1979). Much research into classroom discourse has explored the form of talk, for example turn taking formats (Edwards and Mercer 1987) or talk formats which accomplish learning (Barnes and Todd 1977). However, the educational context and purpose of the seminar is in contrast to the social and interpersonal aspects of the seminar event as talk between peers where more casual conversational forms may be appropriate

(Eggins and Slade 1997). I wanted to explore the interrelationship between these aspects.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question I posed is **What happens in the classroom when learners and tutors are engaged in talking in seminars: are learners demonstrating linguistic competence, subject mastery or putting on a performance?** I deliberately set an open and overarching question as I wanted to capture the range of dynamics that were present in the seminar situation. The tripartite structure of my main research question did not suppose that these categories are necessarily in opposition, students could be carrying out all three aspects or none. Subsidiary questions pick up the particularities of seminar interaction. Although my primary focus is on learners, I have included tutors since they are usually present in seminars and even if they do not engage in the debate, their presence has an effect on the proceedings.

Another way of framing the research question is to consider how far seminars, as a teaching and learning approach, provide effective opportunities for learning. I suspected that the type of talk in seminars would be influenced by learner background; by the tutor; by the academic subject; by the intimacy of relationships between learners. All these aspects are explored.

Subsidiary research questions:

In analysing the research data I focus on the following three dimensions of seminar practice:

<u>Talk:</u>

What are the distinguishing features of student to student talk in seminars?

Are the characteristics of seminar talk similar to casual, informal conversation or to more self-conscious, formal utterances?

<u>Identity:</u>

What socially situated identities are manifested within the seminar context?

Are learners being positioned as social subjects within the power dynamics of the seminar?

Learning:

What learning is going on within the seminar?

THE CONCEPT OF DISCOURSE

It became clear in the pilot study that definitions of discourse needed to be established. The term discourse can be used in many ways and is 'claimed' by different subject disciplines. However for the purposes of this study the following three broad working definitions of discourse are used:

- Meaning 1: everyday speech and conversation - language in use.
- Meaning 2: professional knowledge, specific registers and the speech of epistemic communities. Academic discourse and insider/outsiderness.
- Meaning 3: text as knowledge and as a means to mediate power; hegemony embodied in speech. Individual subjectivity inscribed within texts. Discoursal construction of identity

These meanings are not in opposition, rather they can be seen to represent interrelated levels of understanding. Particular types of discourse may be privileged in the seminar and if so there may be evidence of tension and interplay between discourse hierarchies. Studying language as discourse it is possible to move from meaning 1 to 3 unearthing social, political and cultural relationships through the chains of meaning within discursive patterns and the ways in which language both shapes and is shaped by social order. Mapping discourse definitions onto my research questions generated the following understanding:

Table 1.1: Discourse meanings

Discourse meaning 1	• What are the distinguishing features of student to student discourse? • Is there evidence to suggest that participants engage in the event as a social act in which definition of self is of importance?
Discourse meaning 2	• How far are learners acquiring subject-specific discourse? • Is there evidence that learners are using the seminar to construct knowledge, generating, collaboratively, subject understandings? • Does the subject content of a seminar impact on discourse practice? • Is there evidence that learners are able to negotiate their use of academic discourses; can they exercise control over their role in the seminar?
Discourse Meaning 3	• How far are learners being positioned as social subjects within the power dynamics of the classroom ? • Is there evidence of tension and interplay between discourse hierarchies? If so, how is this manifested and to what effect?

The above organisation suggested a way of analysing the research data once it was collected.

The research questions also generated the following framework for carrying out the literature review and planning data analysis:

1. The seminar as group talk: sociolinguistic elements, turn-taking and speech variation
2. The seminar as talk in an educational context
3. Individual identity and the socio-cultural processes of education

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review section has three sub-headings:

1. The seminar as group talk: sociolinguistic elements, turn-taking and speech variation
2. The seminar as talk in an educational context
3. Individual identity and the socio-cultural processes of education

The review provides a context, established early on in the formulation of the research, to prompt thinking about research design and focus. Other theoretical understandings developed through the research process itself and through further literature review and these are woven into later chapters.

THE SEMINAR AS GROUP TALK: SOCIOLINGUISTIC ELEMENTS

This research adopts a socio-cultural perspective where language use is seen as both a part of culture and the means through which culture is learned. In this model language practices are part of social life both informed by and informing other social practices, part of an 'ethnography of speaking' as proposed by Hymes (1977). Hymes' work took language study away from the purely grammatical and psychological into the socio-cultural arena. Developing Chomsky's (1973) terms of 'competence' and 'performance' into the concept of 'communicative competence', Hymes emphasised the culturally-specific learned behaviours involved in using language appropriately in particular contexts and with different co-speakers. Here analysis of language is not abstracted but takes account of both the context - the *speech situation,* for example ceremonies, meals, parties - and the *speech event,* defined as "activities ... that are directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech" (Hymes 1972:56). Hymes identified a scheme for analysing language in use known as the SPEAKING grid as follows:

S	Setting Scene	Temporal and physical circumstances Subjective definition of an occasion
P	Participant	Speaker/sender/addressor/hearer/ receiver/audience/addressee
E	Ends	Purposes and goals Outcomes
A	Act sequence	Message form and content
K	Key	Tone, manner
I	Instrumentalities	Channel (verbal, non-verbal, physical forms of speech drawn from community repertoire)
N	Norms of interaction and interpretation	Specific properties attached to speaking Interpretation of norms within cultural belief system
G	Genre	Textual categories

Hymes (1972)

Each of the factors in the SPEAKING grid determine use and interpretation of language and emphasise the role of context, an issue which was developed by Halliday (1994a) in his model of language as a social semiotic. Halliday extended context to include other inter-related essential ingredients that can include all forms of actions in communication, specifically:

- Text: that which is said or written to generate meaning
- Situation: the social context including both actual environment and broader contexts of social relationships, meanings and expectations
- Register: a language or text variety according to use, and determined by context, which is recognisable by its specific words, grammar and structure.
- Code: 'the principle of semiotic organisation governing the choice of meanings by a speaker and their interpretation by a hearer' (Halliday 1994a:26) The code is 'translated' and made manifest through specific registers of speech. Bernstein's (1971) work on elaborated and restricted codes linked to middle and working class cultures, explored how codes transmit underlying patterns of culture.
- The Linguistic System: defined as comprising three elements of the semantic system – the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual.
- Social Structure: where social hierarchies and role relationships regulate the meanings potential of language.

Halliday's model allows for analysis of how language enables speakers to make several meanings simultaneously. The text, situation, register, codes and linguistic system operates within a broader social structure. This structure does not function as scenery, it both informs and is informed by the other aspects of the model. Social structure includes social hierarchies and other semiotic processes and systems.

Through this interrelationship, Halliday explains the socialisation of individuals within the social structure, how individuals learn through language;

> "As a child learns language, he also learns through language, and through language he is inducted into culture" (Halliday 1994a: 40).

In learning language, individuals are learning registers and codes of speech. Importantly, the socio-semiotic model is a dynamic and shifting configuration - it accommodates the tensions between human agents and social structure and facilitates the identification and explanation of how, through linguistic processes, social reality is constructed. As such it links to a model of the relationship between the individual and society as a dialogic one, each acting on the other.

By locating the study of language within culture, it is possible to explore individual language practices. Linguistic variables of word choice, syntax, accent, dialect can be related to social divisions and to other social factors such as context, content, status, power, function (Trudgill 1978; Macaulay 1978; Labov 1968; Johnstone & Bean 1997). This is not to suggest a homogeneity of these categories and work on the impact of gender on language use has explored linguistic differences *between* genders (Coates 1994; Ortner 1996) and *within* genders, for example in black women's talk (Scott 2000) and gay men's talk (Bunzl 2000).

As well as the impact of social hierarchies, individual speakers shift their language use, 'code switch', according to other contextual variables such as setting, interlocutor, intention, topic of conversation, social ambition. While this is particularly noted in multilingual speech communities it is also a feature of monolingual communities where code switching which may involve dialect, accent,

style or register (Labov 1968). Different contexts demand speakers adopt a particular language or speech variety - the more formal the situation, the more prestigious the language variety. Individual fluency is likely to be greater in the language used every day, often the informal language, rather than in the other, formal, language. Labov identified *speech communities* where groups of speakers collectively attribute status to particular linguistic features drawn from particular *speech repertoires*.

Members within an educational institution can be conceptualised as forming a *speech community* which has a commonly agreed status afforded to particular linguistic features with high status features being used in formal settings. However, high status features can only be used once they are learned and form part of an individual member's speech repertoire. New entrants into the education community are likely to need to extend their speech repertoire in order to use high status features and fully participate in the speech community. It is therefore likely that within a seminar group there will be a form of bilingualism, or bidialectism at work, with participants being semi-speakers of academic English, learning to use this speech variety in the formal context of the seminar and in other academic situations, whilst continuing to use other speech varieties in other language domains such as the home. Using this model the seminar space can be conceptualised as a *demesne*, a lived language territory (MacKinnon 1977) into which individuals will bring their own speech repertoires - their demotic speech variety - and add to their repertoire the specialised speech variety of academia. The extent to which these varieties are different will depend on a range of social and cultural factors. Middle class language practices for example have been found to be more closely aligned to academic language (Bernstein 1971). It is therefore likely that students' familiarity with the specialised speech variety used in academia will be influenced by their social and cultural background.

While this analysis suggests that student semi-speakers maintain a range of speech varieties, MacKinnon's (1977) work on language shift in bilingual communities offers a way of exploring how permanent language shift can occur where individuals leave behind their language of origin and inhabit the new language variety. Individuals can be deemed to 'live' a particular language variety by inhabiting a language demesne. Analysis is carried out by mapping the linked instances of use of particular speech varieties within particular social and linguistic spaces, e.g. in the school, the home, the

family. The more spaces in which one particular language variety occurs and predominates, the more likely it is that permanent language shift towards that language variety will happen. Extending this analysis to an educational context, the extent to which students shift their speech variety is likely to depend upon the extent to which they become socialised through their higher education career, by drawing their friendship and work groups from amongst other inhabitants of the academic demesne. Such shifts of personal and familial networks often come at high personal cost, causing conflict for individuals, and invoking the syndrome of the 'grammar school boy' who is ashamed of his family and origins (Lovell 1990; Lawler 1999). It is likely that the ideological conflict posed by the language demesne of academia will result in resistance strategies being adopted by some students - quite possibly manifested through language.

<u>The impact of group identity on language practice:</u>

Whilst the speech community model suggests an important role for group membership in shaping language, it has been developed by recent work exploring how sub-cultural identities are not just signalled but are reinforced through language use. Bucholtz (1999) in her study of language and identity practices in a sub-group of adolescent girls applied *a community of practice* rather than the speech community model. Bucholtz argues that while a speech community model is useful when exploring how linguistic phenomena are affected by social factors – a one-way model - it is less useful in exploring how linguistic data can illuminate the social world. The speech community model privileges the group over the individual, emphasising similarities between group members rather than difference, and tends to conceptualise identity as fixed. Where identity is considered from a post-modern perspective, as fluid, multiple, contested and context specific, where particular identities emerge in practice, the speech community model is inadequate. However, a community of practice model where participants negotiate joint enterprise; mutual engagement and a shared repertoire (Wenger 1998:73) enables explorations of how speakers use language to negotiate identity.

Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999) argue that a Community of Practice (CofP) model provides a framework for exploring

- the process by which individuals acquire membership of a community whose goals they share;
- the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence as individuals learn the norms within the group and position themselves as peripheral or core members;
- language change.

The seminar as a community of practice provides a useful model through which to explore the above categories. However, within an educational context, the extent to which a seminar group may be a 'community' is debatable. The term 'community' is notoriously slippery and as a concept is ideologically powerful (Potter and Wetherall 1987:133-6). Any community of practice is more likely to exist in a more overarching sense – membership of a module or course; of a subject area; or of the academic community. However such membership would still fall far short of MacIver and Page's view that "the mark of a community is that one's life may be lived wholly within it" (MacIver and Page (1949) quoted in Worsley (1970:410). The seminar is perhaps better understood as an event where individuals come together to carry out a specific task. However in individual groupings there is likely to be difference in the extent to which individuals do 'share the goals' or indeed resist the goals of these particular groupings.

Seminar groups may thus have more of the characteristics of transient groups who come together for specific purposes and then disband. In his work on focus groups, Myers (1998) argues that while such transient groups may fall short of a sociological definition of a group which has a common identity, with shared norms and goals, focus group members quickly operated within a collaborative milieu, were aware of common purpose and developed shared assumptions. Whilst it may be possible that students will have sufficient overlap of purpose to enable transient groups to form and function, through alliances to particular subject groupings; friendships circles; engagement in particular modules of study and so on, the extent to which students form a cohesive, homogenous group is constrained.

Group cohesiveness is affected by a number of factors. Phatic communication - the inconsequential chit-chat and formulaic ways of approach which doesn't serve to communicate particular meanings, but rather to fulfil a social function, helping to bind groups together (Malinowski 1994). Approaches such as 'Hi, how are you'; 'it's warm in here' provide non-threatening openings for dialogue and social contact amongst strangers and provide a 'friendlier' environment. Situations where phatic communication is constrained are less likely to be conducive to forming cohesive groups. Pike (1964) argued that human behaviour is structured within cultures or communities, each of which has its own 'emic system'. Confusion can occur when participants in one emic system communicate with participants in another.

Changes in educational policy have prompted higher education institutions to broaden their student base, resulting in more students studying part time, being older, from diverse backgrounds, living away from the campus often with family. Student hardship resulting from changes to grants and fees increasingly leads even the 'traditional student' - school leaver, studying full time, living on campus - to work part time. The differing life experiences of higher education students also impacts on motivation and attitude towards studies (Mann 2001). The Dearing Report found that while 71% of full time students had intellectual development as their main orientation towards their studies, for part time students there was much more diversity of view, with the main orientation being 'instrumental' (36%) followed by 'pragmatic' and 'intellectual' both with 28% (NCIHE 1997: Report 2). Modular curricula also provide a fragmented experience for students who may find themselves working in several different peer groups across the week. It is therefore increasingly likely that students will not necessarily know each other very well, if at all, or interact socially outside of the classroom.

The fragmented experience of students may result in sub-groupings and different allegiances within the seminar group, which relate to broader communities of practice, or emic systems. For example, Art & Design students may have particular allegiances and identities and have been socialised, within an art and design context. If they study a business studies module, they may misunderstand the norms of that group or deliberately aim to signal their differences within the group and this is likely to affect their language practices.

Conversation analysis (CA) provides ways of understanding social relationships as they are manifested and negotiated through micro-studies of talk (Sacks et al 1974). The complexity of stylistic change used by individuals in conversation is analysed in communicative accommodation theories (Giles et al 1973; Giles and Coupland 1991). Giles found that speakers tend to talk more like each other when they want to emphasise friendliness and empathy (convergence) and less like each other when they want to maintain a distance or emphasise disagreement (divergence).

The turn taking model developed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), where turns are negotiated smoothly with no overlap offers a useful way of understanding conversation management but also provides a 'standard' from which other ways of conversation management may be deemed to be deviant. The 'standard' model has been challenged by research into the more collaborative conversation patterns of certain groups, for example in Jewish New Yorkers (Tannen 1984) and in all-female discourse, whose characteristics of overlapping speech and the joint construction of turns signals close friendship groupings (Coates 1994). Eggins and Slade's research into casual conversation argues that, for all its apparent arbitrariness, it is a 'highly structured, functionally motivated, semantic activity'(1997:6). Their analysis lays bare the underlying complexities of casual conversation through detailed textual work on grammar, semantics and the analysis of turn-taking and sequencing of functional moves (opening, continuing, responding, rejoinder) used by participants in conversation. Through this analysis patterns of peer relationships, negotiations of power and difference can be explored. An analysis of the conversation management strategies, accommodation patterns, emic clashes between participants provides a way of exploring linguistic markers of external relationships, friendship group membership and identity patterns.

The importance of context in informing language use has been highlighted in this section, in particular, the impact of social divisions, group allegiances, cultural understandings on shaping seminar talk. However, the seminar interchange takes place within an education context and this will also impact on language practices.

THE SEMINAR AS TALK IN AN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Although there is less work on talk in higher education than there is on school and classroom discourse, there are key similarities between these settings. Teachers in higher education ask questions and employ various strategies to elicit responses; there are often significant markers within this interaction; teachers tend to lead and control the proceedings and students comply (or not), just as they do in the school sector. The particularities of this discourse are variously impacted on by social issues of gender, ethnicity, class, and in post compulsory education, by age. There is some exploration in the literature on the difference between teacher to pupil and pupil to pupil talk. Teacher to pupil talk is characterised by I-R-F strategies - teacher initiates; pupil responds; teacher provides feedback, (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). Pupil-to-Pupil talk in schools is often explored with a view to examining how these interactions encourage peer scaffolding of knowledge and understanding (e.g. Fisher 1994; Buckingham 1991; Baker 1997). Pupil to pupil talk is often collaborative and dialogic (Maybin 1994); can be shown to be supportive of learning (Dyson 1994) and to have particular structural features for the patterning of talk as text (Fisher 1994). Where undergraduate seminars have been used as a setting for research, the focus has been on general issues in small group discussions such as how students identify and agree on topics (Bee Tin 2000); the differences between 'on' and 'off-task' talk (Stokoe 2000) and the features of effective educational talk (Fisher 1996) rather than exploring the form and content of student-led seminars.

Work on children's talk in small groups highlights the highly focused, exploratory and collaborative nature of this talk (Barnes and Todd 1977:36). However, group work by children in school is likely to be tightly managed and supported by teacher intervention - for example in Barnes and Todd's work, the pupil groups are working to very structured 'task cards' which specific precisely a framework for discussion. The context in higher education is likely to be more open, diffuse and implicit.

In higher education, the development of student competence in using the academic discourse of particular subjects is embedded, and indeed underpins the curricula and teaching, learning and assessment practices. Whether this is due to an

'apprenticeship' model of higher education (training for research and scholarship); to a perceived pedagogic link between language and learning; or to the development in undergraduates of oral communication skills as part of a package of 'key' or transferable skills is unclear. A report from the Graduate Standards Programme highlights the often-implicit view in higher education that students need to be able to demonstrate their subject mastery both through verbal and written critical reasoning. (HEQC 1995)

Different academic subjects have their own particular discourses which impact on the classroom. In Media and Cultural Studies for example, the privileging of particular academic discourses and methods[1] raise challenges for media education, and teaching and learning practice

> "(Academic media theory) ... While often claiming to be 'on the side of the people', has also displayed a notorious tendency to intellectual obscurantism" (Buckingham 1994:30)

While the subject of media and cultural studies is often the more mundane material aspects of everyday life, the discussion of these media products and processes is centred on the application of highly theorised understandings and their associated codes. Other subjects, such as science may focus on training and preparation for particular professional roles. Much of the literature on the specific registers and discourses of academic subjects focuses on highly specific issues such as the teaching of English for Academic Purposes within education, on legal English (for example Bhatia 1987), on scientific texts (Myers 1990), on challenging the spoken and written dimension of particular professional discourses, particularly exploring how such discourses embed ideologies of exclusion (for example Pettinari 1988, on medical discourse).

As well as subject discourse, there is also the organisational discourse that will impact on individuals. Organisations do not exist outside of the people and processes which are contained by them and can be understood to be 'continuously created and

[1] See Ferguson and Golding (1997) for the debate between textual and sociological approaches.

re-created in the acts of communication between organisational members' (Iedema and Wodak 1999:7). Educational institutions are subject to the same practices and processes which define any organisation, including impersonalisation, and power hierarchies. In educational organisations, communication processes involve staff and students and can be reflected in written, formal documents such as memoranda, reports, committee papers and more informal written texts such as sign-posting, instructions, handbooks, handouts, notice boards. However, communication practices also include oral aspects such as the manner in which staff address each other and students in both formal and informal contexts. Seminars can be seen as a formal and ritualised expression of an organisation's communicative practice, constituted by the organisation and which in turn help to constitute it. However, it is not only linguistic practices which are involved, other meaning making practices can be seen to make up organisational discourse, for example dress codes, time keeping behaviours, physical organisation of the site and its environs, interpersonal behaviours. Organisational discourse is thus multi-modal, operating in different realms and on different levels and it is thus important to explore the variety of discourse modes at work within the seminar.

The body of literature and research which focuses on teaching university students how to use 'appropriate' language skills - the 'how to' oeuvre - could be seen to have developed from a 'deficit model' of English skills and the linked concept of language deprivation. Concepts of deficit and difference in language use were raised in Bernstein's (1971) work on the possible link between social class and the use of restricted and elaborated language codes. Edwards & Furlong (1978) turned this analysis around and argued that schools impose a middle class restricted code on children. In whatever way 'restriction' is viewed, the notion of language deprivation seems to have remained, and can be seen to underpin the "how to" tradition, being manifested in the design of study skills programmes and the assumptions embodied within this literature[2]. These programmes increasingly form part of the curriculum of undergraduate modular courses, and are 'credit rated' although often such modules are there to support 'weaker' students within a culture of broadening access.

[2] see for example the Speak-Write Project at http://pluto.anglia.ac.uk/speakwrite.

A different inflection on the role of such modules could be posed by adopting Bernstein's (1975) understanding of the curriculum as *socially organised knowledge.* In this model, curriculum content is determined by those in power who will attempt to define what is legitimate knowledge in society, what a curriculum will contain and what the relationship is between curriculum elements. Young (1998) drawing on Bernstein's model suggests :

> Relations between knowledge areas are also expressions of power; in this case the power of some to maintain or break down knowledge boundaries. Relations between knowledge areas can be seen as on a continuum between being insulated and being connective"
> Young (1998:15)

Although Young argues that a modular curriculum is on the way to being progressive, in its restrictions it has more in common with Bernstein's 'collection' type of curriculum, whose elements are strongly insulated (Bernstein 1975:88). This type of curriculum can be further understood by the extent of specialisation, measured in terms of the areas of discrete content assessed at any stage. Bernstein argues that with a specialised curriculum a membership category is established early on in the educational career, with pupils being socialised into a subject loyalty which focuses on making explicit difference from, rather than communality with, other subject areas. This in turn leads to strong boundary maintenance that reinforces this difference. A modular curriculum has all of these features but also provides opportunities for students to exercise some choice about the types of collections of modules made. However, modular schemes tend to put choice within very clearly, and often highly complex, subject parameters of co- and pre-requisites, excluded combinations, credit-counting as well as logistical parameters of time-tabling. A modular curriculum could thus be seen to replicate some of the limitations of access characteristic of past curriculum models.

Using the above approach, the insulation of 'study skills' into separate modules which are either optional, prescribed or not allowed to particular constituencies of students could be seen as a way of reducing the connectivity of the curriculum, increasing the

insulation of subject knowledge, categorising and fragmenting the student group and perpetuating social inequalities.

The growing body of research into academic literacies explores the interaction of individuals with institutional discourse from a more political agenda emphasising a clash between the rhetoric of access and inclusivity and institutionalised academic power (Lea and Stierer 2000; Ivanic 1997). Much of the work in this area focuses on exploring links between mature students entering higher education and the challenges this presents to individual identity - students having to learn the 'hidden curriculum' of higher education. This is often most apparent in students' grappling with new ways of writing. Lea and Street (2000:34) identified three models into which research into student writing in higher education can be divided:

- Study skills model (focusing on student deficit). Student writing as technical and instrumental skill;
- Academic socialisation (acculturation of students into academic discourse). Student writing as transparent medium of representation;
- Academic literacies (students negotiation of conflicting literacy practices). Student writing as meaning making and contested.

In arguing for an academic literacies approach, Lea and Street argue that actual student writing practices are complex and cannot just be explained by conceptualisations of the inadequacies of 'non-traditional' students (2000:45). Writing practices do not just involve technical considerations. Neither are they solely about traditional practices of acculturation where students are guided through a set curriculum by a group of staff. I would add that in the new, mass, modular academy, students have to negotiate conflicting feedback from different staff, are often not clear about and do not share staff assumptions about written tasks, have to write in different ways in different modules even within the same subjects. As well as learning 'code switching' students have to employ 'course switching', where different norms and discursive behaviours are valued. For example while written work in English may value students' writing in the first person drawing on their experience and producing a personal response to texts, in other disciplines this is not valued or indeed valid.

There may be different (and conflicting) definitions of terms. Where students are entering academic studies from an experiential work-based world, for example nurses undertaking professional development units, Hoadley-Maidment (2000) suggests that such students often fail to realise the different requirements, for example between a 'report' and an 'essay'. Where students approach an academic essay in the same way that they would a report for a case conference this is likely to lead to 'failure'.

Research into how students give authority to statements in the written components of undergraduate nursing courses, Baynham (2000:25) found that they either made appeals to the literature (theorised knowledge) and took on an impersonalised disciplinary voice or to experience (practical knowledge) and took on an experiential/practice-based voice. Baynham suggests that through writing, students are learning to take up subject positions and argues for an academic writing pedagogy which complements input into the technical aspects of academic writing by making such subject positions explicit and 'teaching the conflict' (Baynham 2000:31). Such understandings are in line with Fairclough's Critical Language Awareness where individuals are made aware of discursive practices and thereby empowered to shape their own practices (Fairclough 1989).

The practices of higher education are increasingly fragmented and coupled with a heterogeneous student group create a context which conspires against students and suggests a need for new ways of formulating teaching and learning strategies, re-conceptualising and re-positioning the student at the centre of the learning experience.

Work by Lea (1996:5) considered how institutional practices 'might unknowingly hinder rather than help students adapt to the new environment of higher education'. Ivanic (1997) explored issues of accommodation and resistance to conventions for the presentation of self by adult female students in higher education. Similar work by Lillis (1997), on how student voices come to be heard (or not) focused on black bilingual women students' experiences of higher education. A sociological perspective would argue that part of the latent function of educational institutions is to maintain difference between educational and everyday knowledge, to ensure that "educational knowledge is uncommonsense knowledge" (Bernstein 1975:99). Bernstein argued that pupils are socialised into knowledge frames which discourage

connections between educational knowledge and everyday knowledge, thus ensuring that educational knowledge, and those that possess it, take on particular significance, emphasising difference and reinforcing social hierarchies (Bernstein 1975:99). Such distinctions may make it particularly difficult for adult learners to negotiate the new identities available to them within higher education. Research into the needs of adult learners have suggested that the ability to change perspective from an old to a new way of thinking and to make critical and informed links between past and present experiences are essential in supporting *'perspective transformation'* (Mezirow 1978, 1981). Institutional framings and pedagogic practices which fail to recognise or value the diversity of experiences which individuals bring to the educational setting, reinforcing differences between educational and social worlds are likely to constrain identity transformations within learners and make adaptation to the higher education learning environment problematic.

While the above examples within the academic literacies approach have focused on the *written* aspect of undergraduate study there are aspects which are transferable to the *spoken* aspects of study but with important differences. Tannen argues that whereas written discourse establishes coherence through lexical - word - features, spoken discourse does so through 'paralinguistic features', such as tone and non-verbal means (Tannen 1982). Coherence in this context is defined as the relationship between ideas, hierarchies of importance, speaker attitude and so on. Street argues that the implications of using different strategies for establishing cohesion in writing or speech are that "speaking exhibits greater attention to the involvement of participants, while in writing there is a greater emphasis on the content of what is said" (Street 1995:168). This may not necessarily be the case in written work in education since attention is given to style and convention as well as content, however coherence maintenance strategies could be a significant aspect of spoken discourse and may relate to differences in expectation of tutors and students.

MacLure (1994) writing on the rise of oracy within the compulsory school sector, suggests four possible rationales for the inclusion of oracy within the curriculum:

- Personal growth

- Cultural transformation
- The improvement of learning
- Functional competence

MacLure (1994:140)

MacLure's analysis provides a framework for exploring possible rationales which underpin the seminar as a teaching and leaning method in higher education. She argued that the *personal growth* agenda grew from a liberal humanist tradition, valuing diversity and difference in languages and cultures and encouraging self-expression, with teachers as guardians and guides in that process. The *cultural transformation* agenda drew on a neo-Marxist tradition where education, in the Althusserian sense as part of the ideological state apparatus, sought to reproduce social divisions (Althusser 1971). Growing understandings of the micro-conduct of classroom interactions suggested that teacher talk dominated, and pupils and teachers were positioned as social subjects. Making individuals aware of this process, for example through Fairclough's (1989) Critical Language Awareness empowers them to resist this positioning.

The third agenda is the *improvement of learning* and the active engagement of the learner in the learning process. This draws on research into early years development on the relationship between talk and learning, particularly as articulated by Vygotsky (1986) and Bruner (1985).

The fourth agenda, *functional competence,* is defined as 'utilitarian' (MacLure 1994) and aims to equip students with a repertoire of language skills related to the range of demands which they may face in the post school environment. It can be linked in compulsory education to the national curriculum attainment target for speaking and listening and in post-compulsory education to the 'key skills' movement. MacLure argues that this definition borrows from Halliday's functional theory of language but effaces the cultural and symbolic aspects of language and cites Barnes (1988:52) who argues against oracy as 'a set of decontextualised skills'.

The rationale for the inclusion of seminars as a teaching and learning strategy will impact on the form the seminar takes. Seminars which arise from an aim to improve learning and develop student competence are likely to be different in form from seminars whose main driver is to bring about personal growth and cultural change. Whatever philosophy may be underpinning seminar design, there is likely to be an implicit belief in the importance of talk in promoting learning. The link between talk and learning was developed by Vygotsky (1986) who maintains that parents, teachers and more advanced peers all play roles in the development of children's understanding through stimulating conversation. Bruner termed this interaction, 'scaffolding', whereby children 'internalise external knowledge and convert it into a tool for conscious control' (Bruner 1985: 24-5), resulting in a 'handover' where learning autonomy gradually transfers from adult to child. Autonomy of thinking for the learner is the ultimate goal and Lipman argues that the learner achieves this by going through a 'conversational apprenticeship', engaging in dialogue within a broader community of enquiry (Lipman 1991).

Although Vygotsky emphasised the importance of learning through practical activity, he argued that individuals can learn more in collaborative problem solving with other people than they can on their own. He termed the gap between what can be achieved individually and that which can be achieved with others as the *zone of proximal development* (Vygotsky 1986). Individuals are extended through this zone primarily through the use of dialogue. Indeed Vygotsky argues that the highest level of development is the ability to use language as a tool of thought, a way of thinking about abstract, rather than practical, concepts. What can be defined as higher order thinking or a semiotic sign-to-sign relationship.

In recent research on ways in which students utilise IT based learning environments, McKendree (1998) explored how far students who observe rather than actively participate in dialogue, can be seen to be learning. He found that "in the struggle to understand a new topic, being able to 'play the voyeur' may offer some important advantages" (McKendree 1998). Students who observe rather than participate have:

- a lower processing load, both emotional and cognitive

- are not as emotionally caught up in trying to defend a position or struggle with a new idea publicly
- experience less cognitive load allowing them to concentrate on the content and process of what is being said
- have the opportunity to reflect on the roles of others and explore the 'modelling' that this provides

This analysis is derived from students involved in on-line seminars, classroom discussions and one-to-one tutorials and thus provides a comparable context to the seminar. Whilst recognising the value to students of observation rather than participation when dealing with new topics, McKendree argues that students do need the opportunity to try out their participation skills at some point. This suggests that observation can be important as part of a planned, linear teaching and learning approach, rather than a substitute for participation.

The seminar can also be used as a vehicle for improving functional competence in the use of oral communication. Whilst assessment of oral skills is now part of the GCSE syllabus and within key skills of Curriculum 2000, it is also gaining a tenuous foothold within higher education. Recommendations in The Dearing Report (NICHE 1997), subsequently endorsed by government, emphasise the importance of developing employability skills in graduates through enhanced key skills provision, careers planning, links with employers and work experience opportunities all within a more explicit and outcomes-focussed HE curriculum. The centrality of 'skills' in the Government's agenda is explicitly linked to concerns from employers about the competence of people joining the workforce (CBI 1991).

A clear agenda is thus set from Government and others for providers of post-16 education to develop strategies for the provision of key skills. However, the 'key skills' issue is not an uncontentious one, raising as it does a clear challenge both to the hegemony of subject knowledge and to the willingness and competence of educationalists to deliver 'process skills'.

The debate in the more de-regulated context of higher education had originally focussed on the concept of 'graduateness' (HEQC 1995). Amongst other areas, the Programme explored the relationship between graduateness and core skills/personal transferable skills and raised concerns about how far skills could be considered separate from knowledge and understanding; issues related to delivery and assessment and scepticism of the actual transferability of key skills. Hyland and Johnson focussing on the 16-19 age group, argue that context-independent, generally applicable skills are illusory and that there is no evidence to support their existence (Hyland & Johnson 1998). However, this perspective could be seen to be overstating the centrality of subject-based knowledge and conflicts with other perspectives, for example that the changing work place needs people who 'Know How not just Know What' where academic expectations are replaced by operational competencies (Havard et al 1998; Havard 1998).

There is also concern amongst academics over the focus on employability and Gibbs (1995) amongst others has argued that the effective integration of the development of employability skills needs academics to be tuned into the needs of business and to believe that this is the best way forward for their students. However, the ethos within much of higher education continues to be focussed on the dissemination of a body of knowledge - 'the subject' - and on subject-based research, a tendency which was enhanced by the Government's Research Assessment Exercise and its links to institutional funding and league tables. In such a context, a move away from a subject base towards more generic development of skills and competencies is constrained.

Such a context suggests that adding formal assessment of communication skills into a well established teaching and learning method - the seminar - is a way of combining the development of subject knowledge with skills and thereby carrying on virtually as usual, with skills semi-embedded. However, I would argue that often it is the method of assessing skills which affects whether they are embedded or separated. Often assessment of skills involves statements of competence, and tick boxes for their demonstration, with the danger that the skills element are only *assessed* and not *taught,* leaving students to second-guess what is required and not have the opportunity for personal development through learning.

This debate provides a useful context for my research. It helps to question the extent to which learners are taught how to participate in seminars. Whether they are being empowered to make discursive choices within this process, or "second guessing" tutor expectations. It would be misleading to suggest that students are duped within the seminar process when they may be adept at adapting to tutor expectations - a point noted by Buckingham (1994) who argues that pupils 'play the teachers game'. However, this suggests a negative reaction rather than a positive strategy to empower individuals to grow and develop through the process of education.

STUDENT IDENTITY AND THE SOCIO-CULTURAL PROCESS OF EDUCATION

As well as being a site for group talk within an educational framing, the seminar is also a social site within and through which individual agents interact and carry out identity forming practices. I therefore want to review social theories which explore the relationship between individuals and social structure.

A heavily determinist approach deriving from Marxist understandings of society, such as that suggested by Grant (1997:101) would propose that the power structures at work within higher education produce individual subjectivities - "docile bodies". Whereas Hall (1994) in discussing media texts, allows for a range of subject positions, *compliant; oppositional* and *negotiated.* These approaches suggest little role for agency and follows a post-modern view of individuals as not having a unified consciousness, where notions of identity are clearly definable , but instead operating as social subjects who are 'composite personalities' (Gramsci quoted in Fairclough 1989:104). However, Fairclough (1989), whilst arguing from a determinist position, also allows that individuals can, through a process of awareness raising (Critical Language Awareness), be empowered to challenge subject positioning. This approach is perhaps more in line with Foucault's (1977:27) concept of power as both *productive* and a *contested terrain* allowing the possibility for individual agents to resist or shape subjectivity within institutional discourses. An active, dialectical relationship between discourse, power and social structure links to Gramsci's (1971)

concept of hegemony where meaning is contested within cultural sites. In such a configuration it is likely that competing discourses will be in operation within the seminar, struggling for hegemonic control.

It would be misleading to imply that there is only one discourse at work within institutions, a dominant ideology. Gilmore identifies at least two streams of institutional discourse - official discourse used by teachers and other staff and a 'sub rosa' discourse constructed by students (Gilmore 1983). Sola & Bennett (1994) found that sub-rosa discourse can be a rich communicative resource, containing verbal and non-verbal behaviours, and take oral and written forms. Through this, pupils found opportunities to have 'a voice' within the competing discourses of the classroom. Indeed, it could be argued that they were able, to some degree, to 'control' and therefore resist the official discourse turning it to meet their own needs (Sola and Bennett 1994). However, one should not overstate this control since as Edwards and Mercer (1994:198) argue, even in progressive classrooms, the influence of teacher control is manifested through the induction of pupils into "the academic world of knowledge and discourse inhabited by the teacher". The implicit freedom within progressive pedagogy is illusory since control continue to be exercised for example through assessment regimes as well as through the process *of cognitive socialisation through discourse*. One has to recognise, and thereby inhabit, discourse to be able to counter it; no one can operate outside of discursive structure. However Foucault's genealogical approach to knowledge suggests that since all ideas were produced at a particular historical moment, by exploring and challenging that history, it is possible to effect change - people do not have to be 'docile bodies' (Foucault 1977)

Arguing for a modified determinism, Hall (1994) suggests that in engaging with texts at all, the reader engages in what is essentially a political act since the ideal subject position inscribed in the text has to be recognised in order to be resisted. In this recognition, the subject position is reinforced. So that in adopting sub-rosa discourse which allows for resistance, there will be a recognition of the discourse which is resisted with the individual being reactively rather than proactively positioned *against* the prevailing educational discourses rather than *towards* an alternative discourse

These accounts use a deterministic model, however, in exploring the relationship between the individual and society, Giddens (1979) argues for a duality of structure within which social agents are enabled to act through structures and in acting, new structures are formed. Although Gidden's approach has been criticised from a post-modern perspective as an attempt to create a social theory which effaces complexity and difference (Craib 1998:62). However, his emphasis on the importance of practical activities, for example language use in social life as the location for knowledge of social conventions, is helpful in exploring how individuals experience identity.

Giddens argues that individuals are reflexive; able to monitor experience; act differently; be rational, and produce and reproduce their social life through the 'reflexive project of the self' (1979). Similarly, from a social psychology perspective, Harré (1979) argues for 'a multiplicity of social selves clustered around any single biological individual'. Giddens suggests that individuals are rule following and rule creating creatures and that rules are embedded in social structures and constituted through social action. Individual identity is integrated into socially created roles which have particular rules. *Locales* provide settings and contexts from which people interpret what to do, however not in a heavily deterministic way - but with individual actors defining their positions in relation to each other.

Much of Giddens' work draws on the microsociological approach of Goffman in the symbolic interactionist tradition of sociology (Goffman 1959). Goffman argues that individuals are *role playing* creatures in a scripted social world (Tuckner 1998:78). For Goffman, social status cannot be conferred, it must be enacted and to belong to or aspire to a given social group, individuals must attain the standards and expectations - the rules - of that group. This challenges the concept of a core, unified self, instead individuals play a variety of public roles, some of them conflicting. Goffman argues that individuals spend considerable resources in reinforcing a sense of a shared social reality which conforms to expectations but which is fragile. The actor may miscue, overact, use the wrong verbal or body language, misunderstand the rules, get the scenery wrong. To manage this situation Goffman argues that individuals develop front and back-stages – front-stage is the public domain where the performance

happens, back-stage is a private area where new roles are rehearsed. (Goffman 1959; 1974)

Goffman's work on performance draws on Durkheim's analysis of the role of ritual in society (Durkheim 1912). Durkheim uses a religious analogy to argue that all societies have culturally defined notions of what is important, what is sacred, and that these ideas are often transmitted through rituals. These rituals act as a symbolic legitimation of ideas, values and beliefs. In a contemporary context, it could be argued that education occupies a sacred place. The current government's rhetoric on the importance of education in governing life chances is enshrined in policy initiatives such as the New Deal and in the increasingly centralised regulation of educational practice and standards. In education, rituals may include assemblies; examinations; prize givings; graduation ceremonies, where ideologies of what constitutes legitimate achievement is reinforced. These rituals are carried out within the sacred spaces of the school, college and university. Entry into these spaces is progressively restricted, through individual performance in examinations set by the 'elders of the academy'.

In exploring the school as a social form, Bernstein (1975) also noted the significance of rituals, seeing these as part of the expressive order where beliefs are transmitted. He divided these rituals into two types - consensual, for example assemblies and ceremonies, and differentiating, those which mark groups off according to age, sex, age, year of study. Bernstein argues that consensual rituals do not necessarily provide coherence - they can alienate those who do not share or understand the expressive order of the school, a situation more likely to occur where the pupil intake is heterogeneous. He sees acceptance of the expressive order having quite profound social impacts on pupils outside the parameters of the school:

> "... (acceptance of the expressive order) may require a re-orientation of the normal procedures a pupil uses to relate in his (sic) family setting and local community" (Bernstein 1975: 60)

The ethos of institutions which are seeking to increase and widen access to higher education, to reduce barriers to entry based on standard qualifications and modes of

study, is likely to produce just such a heterogeneous student body who may feel alienated from the institution's belief system. This may impact on both students' understanding of, and conformity to, the seminar as ritual redefining it in a variety of different and potentially competing ways.

The above analysis provides a framework for the conception of the seminar as a socio-cultural space. A 'sacred space' for the performance of ritual through which novices are inducted by elders, new roles are learned, rehearsed and played out and where organisational belief systems are reproduced. In participating in this sacred space, students are confronted with a ritual which they may resist or accept, provided they recognise it. As Bernstein argues, "ritual is a form of restricted code" (Bernstein 1975:62) and there are likely to be those who do not understand the intricacies of this code. An important aspect of the seminar as ritual is the use of language and just as in religious ritual, particular registers of language will be used. Novices will be inducted into the use of a specialised academic register by learning the language - in a Hallidayan sense - also learning the culture, of a higher status group. The seminar as socio-cultural space provides a useful adjunct to the seminar space as desmene[3] wherein individuals come to inhabit the speech variety which they use and thus cease to be semi-speakers of that language variety.

Implicit within the above is that not all novices will succeed in the seminar ritual and leave the academy with high status credentials, and the seminar, as part of the implicit assessment practices of higher education can be seen to play a role in reproducing social inequalities. The role of education in reproducing social inequality has been argued through research in the sociology of education tradition (see Willis 1977, Bowles and Gintis 1976) and through social theory (Althusser 1971). The *ideological role* of education is part of the hidden curriculum of higher education, where time served in particular institutions and mastery of the discourse of the elite has been part of the apprenticeship for admission into high status careers. Merton's explanation of how social reproduction occurs draws on the concepts of *manifest* and *latent function (*Merton 1957). While the manifest (explicit) function of education may be to enable participants to develop and grow through a process of self-

[3] See page 16 for a definition of desmene as used by MacKinnon 1977

actualisation, the latent (implicit) function may be one of selection and labelling participants as successes or failures. Similarly the manifest function of the seminar group may be to enable participants to develop subject understanding through discussion with peers, using an appropriate register; the latent function may be to exclude those who are not able (or willing) to do so.

Bourdieu's (1999) work on education also emphasises the role played by schools in maintaining difference through standardising cultural and linguistic diversity within a linguistic hegemony, privileging some ways of speaking over others. Elite groups, through education and other social systems, are endowed with markers of cultural capital (language, qualifications etc) which in turn give access to particular types of work and to social status. The 'cultural reproduction' approach to educational inequality is backed up by Sullivan's recent work on the uneven distribution of cultural capital according to social class and education (Sullivan 2001). Cameron (2000) argues that in an increasingly communication-obsessed culture, skills in general represent a form of cultural capital and communication skills a form of linguistic capital, whose unequal distribution is maintained within education.

For Bourdieu, language as symbolic power is a key site of struggle for authority, a site that can be manipulated by learning the rules through the concept of the *habitus*. This he likens to a dance, with implicit rules which are not written down but which can be learned. When individuals change their class location they may find it difficult to learn the new habitus and this may have an impact on self-identity (Wakeford 1994). This view is supported in research by Lawler (1999), who found that female mature students expressed the self in often-contradictory ways. Whether the real, 'deep' self was thought of as middle or working class depended on the situation being described. How to identify the 'real' core self is clearly an issue when individual identity is conceptualised as fluid rather than fixed, with a multiplicity of social selves inhabiting a physical body (Ivanic 1997:251). Lawler's analysis suggests that women who have experienced class mobility cannot fully inhabit their habitus - they feel they might be 'found out' as masquerading as middle class (Lawler 1999). Sensitivity to the importance of language as a marker of 'belonging' can lead to hypercorrection and result in embarrassment. Accent was identified as a particular issue here with middle class accents being the goal but they must be authentic or they become a joke (and, of

course, if they have to be learned, they cannot be authentic). Accent thus reveals the gap between being and seeming; the authentic and the fake.

Bourdieu argues that it is not just through language that social location can be identified. The body itself is placed under the same controlling intentions within bourgeois society as language - what he calls the *bodily hexis* – the embodied gestures, expressions and stances that give away social class. For example, the way of using the mouth, in speech and in eating, drinking, laughing will have different manifestations in different classes and can be used to form judgements about social acceptability:

> the judgement which classifies a speech form as 'popular' or a person as 'vulgar' is based …on sets of indices which never impinge on consciousness in that form.' (Bourdieu 1999:513)

It is worth noting that Bourdieu conceptualises the individual as a product of social structure and emphasises the *'unconsciousness'* of individual actions. Individual agents tend to act out the conventions of the habitus into which they have been naturalised, being positioned within social structure and through culture, and thereby reproducing the social order. Whereas a classroom may have quite explicit rules for the conduct of those in it, the seminar as habitus contains unwritten rules and expectations for language use, accent, gesture, posture, dress, conduct with which participants may not be familiar.

Within the habitus of the seminar, the individual voices of participants are an important marker of culture. The concept of 'the voice' overlays the notion of a speech act with a more political and powerful idea of how particular speech and speakers are categorised within culture. Ivanic argues that individual participants will have a multiplicity of voices within themselves; their autobiographical self, (drawn from their ideas, interests, sense of self-worth) the voices of their friends, families and so on (Ivanic 1997:183). It is likely that the seminar space will, in addition to the autobiographical self and friends and family, contain other voices - the absent-present voice of the tutor, and of other academics. Bakhtin's concept of the multi-voicing of discourse, heteroglossia, whereby individual utterances are 'shot through

with intentions and accents' of other people is useful here and if no utterance is new as well as the 'live' speakers in seminars, the voices of others are also present (Bakhtin 1981:293).

> "The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word adapting it to his own semantic and expression intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language but rather it exists in other peoples' mouths, in other peoples' contexts serving other peoples' intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own" (Bakhtin 1981:293-4)

Whilst there is thus a difficulty in finding a language of one's own, in order to participate in dialogue one must first acquire a voice, and, as Gurevitch points out, also a hearing. This involves recognition by others either by speaking and thus demanding a hearing or by listening and hearing another's voice (Gurevitch 2000:249). Through this process the subject is likely to develop his or her own idiolect of academic discourse.

In an exploration of Bakhtin's concept of dialogical plurality, Gurevitch argues that key features in dialogue such as entrance and exit, opening and closure of topic, speech and silence, rather than being areas where the 'wholeness' of speech is maintained, instead display the instability and threat inherent in dialogue. (Gurevitch 2000:243). Drawing on Bakhtin, she suggests that dialogue can be understood as the sum of the histories of being in dialogue with others - ie both speech and silence, the whole genealogy of talk, meanings and speakers of words - and that this range of possibilities is embodied in folk memory:

> "Dialogue is at once speech and silence … a genealogy of talk, meanings and histories of a word with which each spoken utterance is already charged, … a genealogy of breaks, collisions, contradictions, stops, silences, non-communication, incoherence, short circuits, insufficiencies, overflows, with which any dialogue is already informed and which reveal themselves in

> moments of actual break, but otherwise lurk behind as a threat or even a promise out of compulsory dialogue and imposed talk … memory as a part of dialogical knowledge. (Gurevitch 2000:251).

She argues that in *'threshold'* moments, which can be understood as the entry into dialogue but can also be any moment in dialogue where another entrance presents itself (eg through change of topic, who speaks and who does not), all the histories of dialogue, all its instabilities and possibilities of alienation are encountered. Such moments may be apparent in the seminar talk and provide indication of dislocation.

The literature provides a variety of lenses through which to understand seminars as a socio-pedagogic space:

- The seminar as *locale* where individuals with multiple social selves, occupy different positions of power and authority, play roles by following rules, and mark social positions. This enables an understanding of similarities between seminar events as well as *differences* in seminar interactions.
- The seminar as *hegemonic space*, where meanings are contested in the discursive interplay between participants.
- The seminar as *sacred space* for the performance of ritual through which novices are inducted by elders, new roles are learned, rehearsed and played out. Just as in religious ritual particular registers of language are used in the performance of these roles, and novices are inducted into a specialised academic register and culture.
- The seminar as *habitus – symbolic space* through which power is exercised and difference maintained.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH ORIENTATION: INTERPRETIVE OR POSITIVIST?

An early decision in the research process concerned the research tradition in which to locate my work whether within an interpretive tradition, largely associated with sociologists such as Weber, Goffman and Garfinkel which seeks to produce understandings of meaning and the significance of the social world for human agents, or within a positivist tradition, associated with Comte, Durkheim and Parsons, where explanations and predictions of social events are sought, often through the application of scientific research approaches (Gilbert 1993:7). A positivist approach would tend to see social events as phenomena amenable to objective investigation and deductive reasoning and to use data, usually numerical, which is quantifiable, measurable and replicable. The interpretive tradition is more focused on illuminating lived experience, focusing on small scale, in depth, analysis of participants or phenomena using a methodological framework which is exploratory rather than testing; open-ended rather than pre-formed, and where human actions, within specific contexts, are subject to interpretation.

Decisions on research orientation are not about procedural choices of quantitative or qualitative research methods but about the philosophical location of the research, as Erickson says, the orientation of research is "a matter of substantive focus and intent, rather than of procedure in data collection" (Erickson 1986:120). This is supported by Maxwell who advocates keeping a clear sense of the purpose of undertaking the research:

> "... purpose in a broad sense to include motives, desires, goals, anything that leads you to do the study and that you hope to accomplish by doing it... personal purposes, practical purposes and research purposes" (Maxwell 1996:14)

The purpose of this research was to understand the *meanings* generated through seminar practice for participants; to understand the *context* within which seminars operate; to understand the *processes* at work. My research focus was exploratory in nature, I had no hypothesis to test, instead, I was starting with a series of research questions. I did not feel that research into students' participation in seminars was amenable to objective, quasi-scientific observation approaches. This suggested that an interpretive approach to the research was likely to be most productive.

Interpretive ethnography

The interpretive research tradition is associated with a range of different schools of thought, including symbolic interactionism, anthropology, sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology, qualitative evaluation, neo-Marxist ethnography and feminist research (Atkinson et al 1993). My research takes an interpretive ethnographic approach which concerns itself with exploring the 'taken for granted' assumptions and tacit knowledge which people use to make sense of everyday life. By studying people in their 'natural settings' an ethnographic approach tries to appreciate situations from the member's perspective, recognising that they hold expert knowledge. This approach begins with a situation to be studied (rather than, say, a theory to be explored), data is produced from which understandings and interpretations about particular social situations can be drawn. An ethnographic approach is particularly helpful in exploring language use and social interaction, for example in conversation analysis (Schegloff and Sacks 1974) and discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherall 1987). In choosing how to explore seminars, it was important to me to adopt an approach which was flexible enough to accommodate my developing thinking about seminar practice. A seminar is a small-scale event, involving interaction of human actors. This type of situation suits an ethnographic approach which is particularly applicable to the exploratory focus of my research topic (Hammersley 1992)

Ethnography has grown out of a tradition of anthropology and typically involves detailed study of small samples, focusing on extracting data which has depth, intensity and richness (Fielding 1993:155). This is not to suggest that ethnography necessarily

represents a unified approach (see Hammersley 1992) however, it is helpful in providing a framework through which to conceptualise the research process and inform judgements about research instruments, for example, whether observations should be participant or non-participant; how to negotiate access to research settings; how to make observations in settings; relationship with research subjects; issues in data analysis; how to factor-in validity and reliability.

Educational research

Research into education is a contested terrain, with competing perspectives on its role and purpose. Debate surrounds how far educational research should inform policy making or inform practice. There are also more fundamental debates about the relationship of educational research to theory formation and to practice - does theory inform practice or vice versa? (Hammersley 1993). The move away from positivist approaches which seek to unearth 'truths' towards more interpretive approaches which seek to tell stories, has also raised questions about the universality and therefore usefulness of micro-ethnographic research. This methodological turn highlights the increasing disjunction between much recent educational research and the importance placed on quantitative indicators of quality used in national educational policy formation (Hammersley 1993). Here, the focus on improving educational standards and using evidence-based policy making sits uneasily with an educational research community whose concerns have moved away from attributing causal relationships.

In exploring the link between theory and practice in education, Carr argues that educational practice cannot be characterised as theory-dependent or guided, neither is it theory-free, rather it is *praxis* which he defines as 'a form of reflexive action which can itself transform the theory which guides it' (Carr 1993:173). This conceptualisation emphasises the interdependence of theory and practice in the classroom. Whether or not theory is overtly recognised, teaching practice is informed by views or personal standpoints of the purpose of education, the roles of tutor and learner, expectations of behaviours etc. The concept of praxis is used by Gramsci to promote an egalitarian social and political ideal based on reciprocity. In this model

researchers and research subjects are equal partners in the process of social change (Gramsci 1971; Entwistle 1979). I am not convinced that such an egalitarian relationship is possible within the research process. Whilst it is possible to minimise oppressive power relationships, promoting involvement, consulting and seeking consensus, the researcher remains in a position of control through the inferences and judgements made. In carrying out this research I tried to work within a reciprocal framework, conceptualising my research subjects as co-researchers, and involving them within the research process. However, asking research subjects to become co-researchers could be seen to be a more subtle form of oppressive practice, making resistance harder – a point I will return to.

Other researchers (Schõn 1983; Kolb 1984) have developed understandings of the role of critical reflection in supporting the development of practice as a key component of action research. Action research, the teacher as researcher, as developed by Stenhouse emphasises the role of critical reflection on practice as a way of developing the professionalism of the teacher (Stenhouse 1975). At the start of my research I was intent on following a model of action research since I was a teacher researching into my own practice. The action research model suggests a position whereby valid educational research cannot be separated from practice. It also suggests that research not carried out by practitioners has less value since it is theory-driven.

However, during the course of the research, two things happened which made me re-visit this stance. Firstly I changed my role and stopped being a practising teacher whilst remaining engaged in educational management and practice. Secondly I increasingly began to question the action research model. If I were no longer a teacher, did that make my research invalid? I thought not, in fact the distance afforded by my change in status I found helpful in understanding the complexity of processes at work within the seminar classroom. Hammersley argues that whilst teacher research is helpful it does not substitute for more conventional forms of educational research (Hammersley 1993:226) Research carried out from a range of perspectives and standpoints is helpful in illuminating the complex processes at work within education and promoting dialogue within the wider educational community. I see my research contributing in this way.

Validity, reliability, generalisability

I understand my task as a researcher to be to explore meaning on different levels, illuminating seminar processes within a particular context. At the first level, some aspects of this process will be unique to that particular event, with those particular participants in that particular context and cannot be reproduced. At the second level, aspects will be specific to similar events and contexts, such as other undergraduate seminars in other Higher Education classrooms. At the third level there may be aspects which can be generalisable to broader issues to do with teaching and leaning practice. My approach to my data was to explore from the particular to the general, however I do not intend that the data generated is generalisable to a wider population, instead it provides insights which can inform wider academic debate, forming part of the dialogic community and recognising, to quote Cherryholmes:

> "Research findings tell stories. Often they are about putative cause and effect. Sometimes they are descriptive, sometimes explanatory. Research findings tell stories that are, more or less, insightful and useful in shaping what we think and do (Cherryholmes, 1993:2)

As such the case study nature of the research does not support generalisation but offers new data which can inform the views of significant others through comparison, challenge and the development of inference.

In designing research methods and analytical frameworks, I focused on a 'fit for purpose' approach. The resulting data is both quantitative and qualitative which I suggest adds value to the study by providing 'between-method' triangulation and validation of research conclusions, an important part of the research process (Arksey and Knight 1999:23).

Considerations of objectivity and the avoidance of bias within the research process is important within any research paradigm. Objectivity within a positivist tradition has its origins in the natural sciences, linked to rationality within the research process – a

process which relies upon epistemological foundationalism (ie that knowledge is based upon some solid foundation and that uncovering this involves a logical sequencing of deductions from data to conclusions). This process assumes the objectivity of the researcher who is deemed to be value-neutral and has the role of making deductions from the available data - to exercise deductive reasoning. However, this disjunction between knowledge (episteme) and belief (doxa), is problematic and, some would argue, is based on a spurious duality since an adherence to the belief system of science becomes a faith in itself, with its own prejudices, superstitions and irrationalities (Seidman 1994). This view is supported by Eisner who suggests that all research involves some standpoint (of concepts, theories, ideologies) and that 'belief, supported by good reasons, is a reasonable and realistic aim for inquiry' (Eisner 1993). Here Eisner draws on work by Toulmin who suggests that researchers would do better to abandon all search for objective knowledge and instead identify 'well founded rather than groundless opinions, sound doxai rather than shaky ones' (Toulmin 1982:115). This is the approach I have adopted in establishing and making explicit my own standpoint to the research.

In keeping with the general qualitative approach, an early decision was taken not to identify an hypothesis to be tested but rather to identify some research questions, gather some data, subject this to analysis and interpretation, and then to refine methodological approaches. Maxwell (1996:53) identifies the difference between an hypothesis and research question, "research questions state what you want to learn. Hypotheses, in contrast, are a statement of your tentative answers to these questions – what you think is going on". My view was that by setting an hypothesis at the beginning of the research the interpretative framework would have been fixed and may have excluded other creative understandings generated through the data. I chose instead to identify broad research questions to provide a focus to data analysis.

However on reflection it is questionable whether such a 'pure' stance is possible when undertaking research. As the research proceeded it was increasingly apparent that my personal standpoint to the research could be seen to form an implicit hypothesis. The research was generated by a need to understand more clearly what value, if any, seminars had as a teaching and learning method within a personal ideology of promoting social equality, and supporting equality of opportunity. I clearly had a standpoint in undertaking the research.

Later in this chapter I discuss the settings, subjects, definitions, conceptual models and research instruments I used to generate and analyse data.

Applied linguistics

Following the model of the classroom as hegemonic space[1] I approached the study of talk from the perspective of language as a situated, and contested, activity. The analysis draws on techniques of conversation analysis, discourse analysis and systemic functional linguistics (Sacks et al, 1974; Fairclough, 1989; Halliday, 1994b). Analysing the seminar talk as text needed a methodological approach which could facilitate understandings of the features of that type of 'conversation'; what type of discourse was being used and what social relationships were being enacted. I decided to use Halliday's systemic functional linguistics as the framework for analysis as it both supports textual analysis and the exploration of relationships between texts and their social contexts. As Fairclough notes, whilst textual analysis is fixed on what is in the text, systemic functional linguistics enables an analysis of what is absent as well as what is present, since it reveals choices made and choices entail exclusions as well as inclusions (Fairclough 1999:205).

I also drew on Fairclough's (1989:109) three dimensional view of discourse and discourse analysis (analysis of context; analysis of processes of text production and interpretation; analysis of text), to develop a concept of the seminar as socio-pedagogic space, a space where three intersecting planes of meaning-making practices collide:

- the institutional or contextual plane
- the individual plane
- the textual plane

Figure 3.1 describes the planes of interaction within this socio-pedagogic space.

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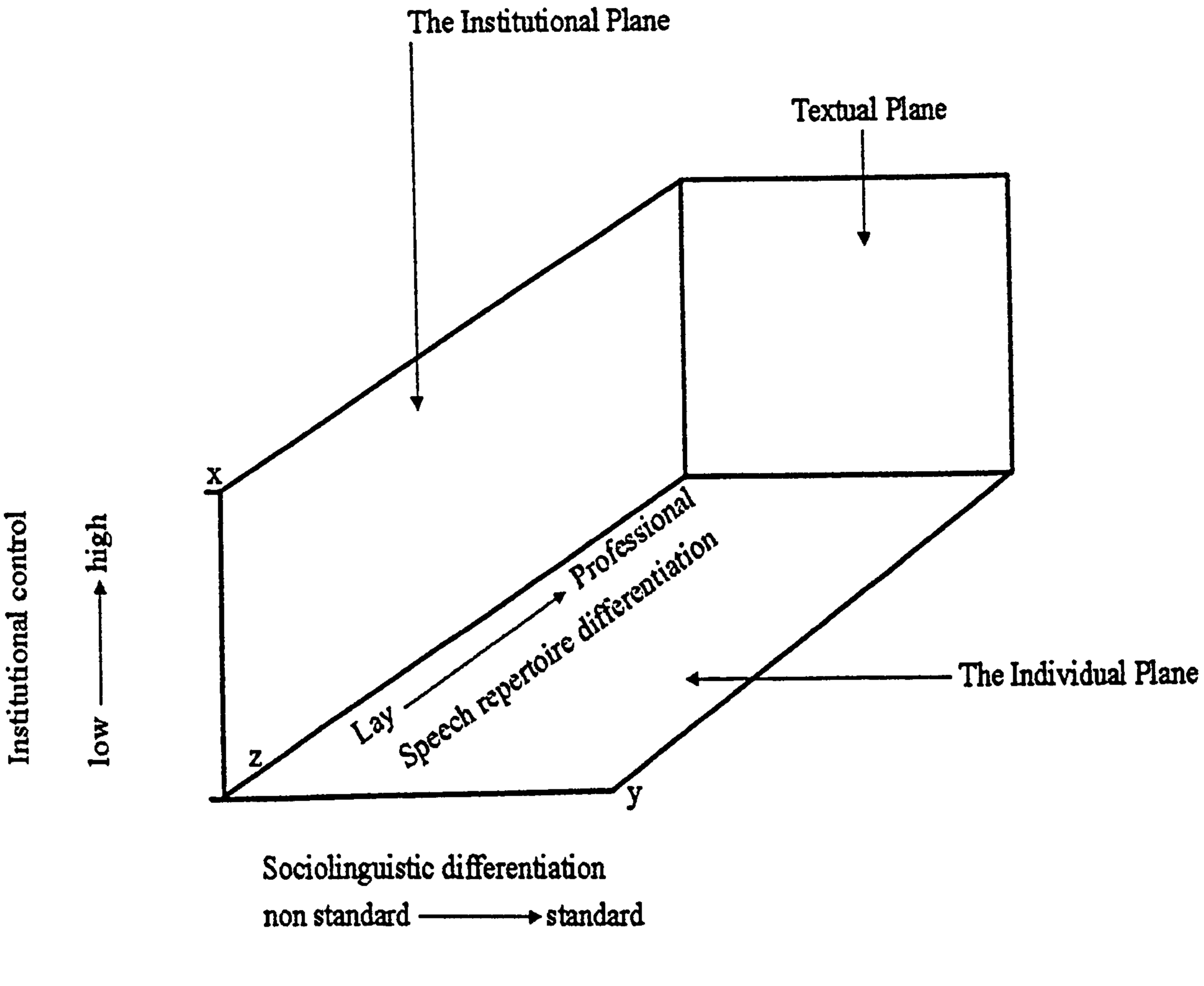
[1] Model 1.1 page 6

Figure 3.1: the seminar as socio-pedagogic space



This model incorporates my definitions of three broad types of discourse as explored in Chapter 1 pp 10 – 11. Discourse meaning 1, language in use, relates to the 'y' axis, discourse meaning 2, specialist register, relates to the 'z' axis. Discourse meaning 3, discourse as power, relates to the seminar space as whole, incorporating the impact of the institution ('x' axis) on individuals manifested through the processes of text production and interpretation.

Defining seminars:

Whilst a definition of a seminar as a 'small group discussion' provides a general overview it does not indicate the range and diversity of experience which awaits the learner. In attempting a definition, Marshal and Rowland provide the following examples:

- A mini lecture where the teacher imparts information
- A group in which the teacher remains relatively unobtrusive and the rest of the group manages itself
- A seminar series where each member takes a turn as chairperson
- A group which uses interactive exercises such as role-playing
- A session which emphasises the less subjective, rational aspects of learning

These sessions may focus on:

- Formal debates on issues, solving a specific problem, or working on a particular piece of research
- Discussions structured around a paper given by a group member or based on set reading or
- Sharing experiences and feelings as well as discussion intellectual issues

(Marshall and Rowland 1998:164)

There is often ambiguity of terminology relating to small group teaching where the terms 'tutorial' and 'seminar' may be used interchangeably (Race and Brown 1998). In an attempt at differentiating between types of small group work, they identify seminars as *student-centred occasions.*

Tutor role in the seminar classroom is often ambiguous – sometimes observing the proceedings, sometimes acting as prompter in the discussions, sometimes leading; sometimes as participant; sometimes assessing. Tutor role may well vary with the

processes at work in particular seminar events - as indicated below in this example of what can go wrong in seminars:

> "sometimes (seminars) can take the form of one or two ill-prepared students struggling through a prepared paper, which is followed by desultory discussion leading to the tutor losing patience and taking over the session as a secondary lecture opportunity" (Race and Brown 1998:89).

Given the variety of activities which go under the title of seminar, how possible is it to identify similar events? For the purpose of this research, I used the following characteristics of seminars to form criteria for selecting seminar events. As such seminars are learning events:

- which have been defined as seminars within the students published learning programmes.
- where a student presents a pre-researched paper to a group of peers and subsequently leads a discussion.
- where a tutor is present and may or may not participate in discussion.
- which contain some assessment function (eg of participation; of a subsequent written paper; or as an attendance requirement)

I call these *student-led seminars.* Although there are many variations on the form, organisation and purpose of seminars, using the above criteria provides a methodological framework for identifying events which are likely to generate meaningful research data. I argue that events matching these criteria are likely to be recognised as seminars and will support research outcomes which are relevant to the academic community.

RESEARCH SETTING

Research took place in a single setting. An early decision was made to focus the research on the college in which I was employed as an academic manager. My rationale for this choice was twofold. Firstly pragmatically I had ease of access to

these groups, and had good relationships with tutors, which helped to negotiate a trust relationship with student groups. Secondly, the type of students enrolled on undergraduate programmes in the college were likely to come from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, and be of different ages thus providing a range of co-research subjects.

The seminars all took place in classrooms in a large college of further and higher education in East Anglia where students were studying on the modular degree programme. It is a 'mixed economy' institution where higher education students make up approximately 45% of the student population (c. 3,000 full time equivalent students when the research was carried out), the remainder made up of further and adult education students. The College's mission stresses its role as a community college which encourages access, wide participation and 'excellence through diversity'. The college is the main provider of higher education in the county. Approximately 55% of the college's higher education students are drawn from the county and of these approx. 42 % are mature students. The college is managed through separate higher and further education sections with little staff cross over. The provision of significant higher education in this organisational context has not been usual in the UK and the college is thus atypical. It does however share many of the characteristics of the old polytechnics in its vocational, community and access focus and, with policy changes increasing the incidence of higher education provided within further education institutions, could be seen as a model for the future.

The college's heterogeneous student body is typical of student groups within an increasingly mass system of education in the UK where students, particularly in colleges and the new universities, come from non-traditional backgrounds, through non-traditional preparatory routes of study (Schuller, 1995). Students are increasingly likely to be studying on modular programmes which encourage breadth as much as depth and where mixing of different subject modules in individually negotiated pathways is common. Both full and part time students study together, a situation which, with more students working part time, is increasingly common (Tight 1991). Siting the research in the college setting was thus likely to yield rich data, however the college is not a higher education institution or university and this may impact on its higher education practice.

What a single setting does not provide is the opportunity for comparison or for a representative selection of settings. I have argued earlier that seminars themselves are rarely defined and seminar events are likely to vary according to participants, the subject area and the institutional setting. I therefore suggest that identifying a number of seminars in one setting provides an appropriate research data set. Institutional framings will impact on seminar events and the research could have chosen to compare seminars in various settings, such as pre and post 1992 universities as well as higher education and further education colleges. However, such an approach was not consistent with the aim of this research to generate rich data through which to explore the seminar event. Given the qualitative nature of the research, it is unlikely that findings, from however many settings, could be truly generalisable to any other context. My approach is analogous to single case analysis within conversation analysis and ethnomethodological research and is an established method for conducting studies of talk in interaction (Yin, 1994; Cohen & Manion 1997).

Sampling

The approach to sampling was opportunistic and highly circumscribed within a single setting. The *sampling population* was the list of modules, from all subjects, available on the undergraduate modular degree programme in the college. From this list a *sampling frame* was identified which included modules with the following characteristics:

- Modules were at Level 2 or 3.
- Modules contained seminars as a teaching and learning method
- Seminars conformed to the broad definition used by the research (student-led seminars).

In early discussions with colleagues I found that Level 1 modules did not offer student-led seminars and so were excluded from the sampling frame. This limited opportunities to compare seminars across all three levels of study which might have illuminated student progression as they became more skilled at seminar participation.

The choice of modules from the sampling frame was governed by considerations of access and of the need to provide a sample from different fields of study. Access in this context was not just about gaining 'permission' but being able to gain the trust of a tutor and a group of students to work together, thus providing 'value-added', empowering participants and ensuring inferences made from the data was as rigorous as possible. It was thus important for me to have or be able to build a good relationship with tutors and students. However, this way of working precluded taking a large sample, particularly where this may have involved the same tutor since I felt this had the danger of overloading colleagues. My status as an insider researcher (Elliott, 1998; Scott and Usher, 1996) both facilitated this approach, in that I had worked with some colleagues for many years and knew them well, but also constrained it, in that I could identify colleagues whom I knew from experience would be less willing to work on the research. I also had the opportunity to discuss at a research design stage with colleagues what types of activities went on in their seminars so that actual practice could inform my definition of a seminar. I was able to discuss my research with the student group in order to seek their willing participation in the research process. I found that some subject areas, such as business studies, did not hold student-led seminars. Two student groups did not want to participate in the research, feeling that this would compound the stress they already experienced in seminar situations. I would therefore argue that the constraint of my insiderness was ameliorated by better access to and relationships with the staff and students involved and facilitated identification of appropriate research samples.

Although the setting for the research can be seen as artificial since it is a teacher required element of a learning programme, I would argue that for the purposes of this research it is naturally occurring - it has not be set up specifically for the research process. However, it is not a naturally-occurring phenomenon, being part of the formal practice of higher educational establishments. In order to understand seminar practice, a micro-sociological approach with data generated from actual events using methods such as observation, recording of speech and interview are appropriate research instruments. As the event takes place within a specific, educational setting, complementary data has been gathered from institutional documents and interviews

with tutors and students in order to generate multiple perspectives on the processes and context within which the seminars take place.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data was collected through:

- observation of seminars and recording and transcription of seminar talk;
- group interviews with seminar participants (called group-debriefs);
- semi-structured one to one interviews with staff and students;
- review of official documents (student handbooks; handouts and briefs)

Collectively these methods provided opportunities for triangulation which allowed the research questions to be explored from different angles as an aid to validity. I did consider carrying out a life history (autobiographical) approach which is used to generate more depth of case study data and has been particularly influential in feminist research (Devault, 1990; Shah, 1994). This would have enabled more interpretation of individual student's orientation to their studies. However, on reflection this was only a small component of my overall research design and intention and I felt that such an approach would be resource heavy and would take me too far away from my main research focus.

Seminar observations

Thirteen undergraduate seminars were observed over a period of two years between 1999 and 2001. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the seminar groups. Some 18 hours of seminar talk was recorded ranging across 5 subject areas involving 77 people. Seminar participants ranged in age from 20 – 62 years with an mean age of 26.8 years. 74% of participants were women (57 people) and just under 4% were from ethnic minority groups (3 people).

Table 3.1: Seminar data

Seminar Group and Subject area		Length of seminar	Student Details			
			F	M	Mean Age (years)	Age range
Group A	Cultural studies	50 mins	3	1	31.5	24-53
Group B	Cultural studies	50 mins	As Group A			
Group C	Cultural studies	50 mins	As Group A			
Group D	Media Studies	1 hour	4	1	25.4	21-35
Group E	Media Studies	50 mins	2	2	25.3	21-36
Group F	Media Studies	50 mins	2	2	21.3	21-22
Group G	Media Studies	1 hour	8	1	27.1	21-50
Group H	Media Studies	1 hour	6	2	32.1	21-48
Group I	Tourism Studies	3 hours	9	3	28.1	20-61
Group J	Tourism Studies	3 hours	6	5	25.5	21-62
Group K	Science	1 hour	4	1	29.4	23-38
Group L	Performing Arts	1.5 hours	13	2	22.3	21-40
Group M	Performing Arts	1.5 hours	As Group L			
TOTALS		**17 HOURS 50 MINS**	**57**	**20**	**26.8**	

The observation of the seminar group was from the point of view of a non-participant observer. However, I do not claim to have been a neutral observer. It is likely that my presence had some effect on the type of discourse being used - for example through the *Hawthorn effect* where research subjects change their behaviour because they know they are being observed (Cohen and Manion 1997:171). In my role as interpreter of the research data I am aware that I may have added additional bias to the research process. As Hammersley says 'all we have are interpretations, and the ethnographer's account is just as much an interpretation as are those of the people that he or she is studying' (Hammersley 1994:14).

My observations of the seminar groups were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. I experimented with a range of audio and video combinations to record the seminars. While I found that transcribing from audio recording and checking against a video recording to check who said what and non-verbal behaviours (important when the students are unknown to the researcher) was a useful model, I was aware that using video caused considerable student anxiety adding to an already

stressful situation for them. Instead, I found that developing my observational techniques enabled me to achieve a similar outcome - making notes of behaviours, body language, turn taking, as I observed the seminar and using this record to supplement the audio transcription. This was less intrusive, less threatening to students and enabled me to make my own notes of relevant issues during the observation.

I also tested using an amended standard observational record, the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) which has the capacity to generate quantitative date against pre-set categories of behaviours (Flanders 1970). However, in practice I found that the type of data generated through this approach had serious limitations. The pre-set categories were too rigid to capture the diversity of behaviours and the apparent 'security' such a tool provides for objective recording is illusory. Since the process being observed is such a human and 'messy' one, trying to record it in an overly pre-determined way relies too heavily on researcher interpretations of various categories and then fitting observations into those categories. Instead the combination of audio recording and note taking was a more responsive tool and more in keeping with my interpretive orientation. However, I would not suggest that this, or indeed any observational method, is able to fully capture or replicate the interaction seen within the group, it can only provide snapshots of this process. It is itself an interpretation albeit one based on an explicit set of methods and intentions and consequently capable of replication.

One-to-one interviews

Individual semi-structured interviews were used to generate additional data from participants' perspectives on their seminar experience. Interviews lasted between 35 and 50 minutes and details are provided in Table 3.2

Table 3.2: Interview data

Interview	Interviewee	Seminar Group
Student 1	Alice	J Tourism
Student 2	Tracey	J Tourism
Student 3	Susan	J Tourism
Student 4	Stephanie	B Cultural studies
Student 5	Robert	B Cultural Studies
Staff 1	Vera	J Tourism
Staff 2	Matthew	D Media
Staff 3	Chris	M Performing Arts
Staff 4	Cynthia	K Science
Staff 5	Sadie	B Cultural Studies

In her research into academic writing and identity, Ivanic (1997) claims that individuals are positioned as a member of an academic community by adopting the particular lexico-grammatical and other conventions of that community. I was interested in exploring how far participants 'act out' engagement with academic conventions and how participation in a seminar group may impact on changing individual definitions of self. These issues were teased out during the interview.

A collaborative approach in conducting interviews with participants was used so that understandings of participants' own views are valued and inform research outcomes. The semi-structured format, with general topics identified to guide the direction of the interview enabled some continuity between each interview, whilst also encouraging the interviewee to add his/her own issues. Attempts were made to probe and prompt to gain deeper understandings. This approach to interviewing has been defined by Lofland as a 'guided conversation' (Lofland 1971), it enables a relaxed approach which puts participants at ease in order to enable them to put forward their points of view.

All interviews were audio recorded to enable more detailed analysis after the interview. Transcriptions were shared with interviewees so that they could add further thoughts or make amendments, so supporting the collaborative intent of the research. Audio recording also enabled me to focus on the discussion and on the interviewee rather than on writing notes.

Research literature highlights the many effects which the interviewer has on the respondents input, including over-politeness, responses shaped to perceptions of what the interviewer wants to hear, constraints posed by a mismatch of gender, class, ethnicity between interviewer and interviewee. I took steps to minimise these effects by piloting my interview approach; by clearly explaining the purpose of interview; by seeking views on interview topics and structure and, because of my 'insider' status, making clear my role as a researcher and how confidentiality would be secured.

All seminar participants were invited to come for a one-to-one interview by letter and reminded at the seminar event. However, of 32 students invited only 5 came forward to be interviewed. These five were all mature students from the group (an interesting finding in itself, which I will return to in my analysis). This resulted in the voice of younger students not being heard and I therefore substituted student interviews with a post-seminar student group debriefing session to enable a wider range of perspectives to be gathered - details of which are provided below.

One-to-one interviews were also conducted with each member of staff whose seminars I observed.

Transcripts of all interviews were sent to the interviewees for comment or amendment. One of the student interviewees subsequently discussed their transcript with me and added a further point. No response was received from the other four students. All staff interviewees responded with some further reflections but made no changes to the transcript.

Group debriefings

These sessions were set up to replace one to one interviews, which were only reaching mature students, to enable all group participants to contribute. Three group debriefing sessions lasting 30 – 45 minutes each were recorded. The sessions were held immediately following the seminar and were audio recorded and later transcribed.

Although I judge the group debrief approach to be generally effective in enabling a range of student perspectives to be heard, there were some shortcomings. I had difficulties in leading and prompting discussion while making observational notes, however the audio recording enabled detailed analysis after the event. Group dynamics impacted on responses with some views dominating. This made it difficult for dissenting voices to be heard, particularly from more timid group members. However I was able to intervene by posing challenge and drawing in quieter group members where necessary, thus gaining a wider range of views but also leaving my mark on the discussion process. Observing the group dynamics at work in a less formal situation than the seminar was, however, useful in understanding more about the interpersonal relationships of the group.

Review of official documents

Student course handbooks; module handbooks; module outlines and any additional information given to students was reviewed. This enabled an understanding to be built up of what guidance students are given on preparing for seminars.

TRANSCRIPTION CHOICES

These are derived from Jefferson's system as outlined in Atkinson and Heritage (1984). However I have taken on board Swann's (1994) caveat that complex notations which seek to give detailed interpretations of talk are in danger of being spuriously scientific and embed the researcher's interpretations into the text, overshadowing the text's other voices. I have therefore chosen to keep transcription notation simple. Likewise with punctuation of transcribed talk, I have kept this to a minimum which aids understanding

(.)	Brief pause
(2 sec)	Timed pause – 2 seconds
( )	Unclear speech
(brilliant)	Transcription uncertain: a guess
{skin	overlapping speech
{the content	
[laugh]	A sound which forms part of the utterance
[……]	material which has been left out of the extract
<u>underline</u>	Features I wish to comment on

DATA HANDLING AND CODING

Coding framework

The research attempts to engage with the paradigms of naturalistic enquiry and to take a grounded theory approach to data analysis, building up both a conceptual framework and developing explicit links between this and the research instruments. In this model theory is grounded in and emerges from the research data and process through inductive reasoning (Glaser and Strauss 1988). Through the process of inductive interpretation, phenomena are noted and organised.

I adopted a coding approach explored by Coffey & Atkinson (1996) whereby concepts are generated from and with the data and then coded. The aim of coding data is to provide opportunities to retrieve data from a variety of sources and thus to establish links or identify contradictions (Seidel & Kelle 1995:52 quoted in Coffey & Atkinson 1996)

Whilst recognising the importance of such approaches in making the analysis of data manageable, there are dangers if the process of coding becomes an end in itself, resulting in *data reduction*, where the richness of the data is lost through shunting it into categories. However Coffey and Atkinson stress that coding qualitative data can be conceptualised as an exercise in *data complication*, where the identification of contradictions, absences and incoherence is given as much importance as the recognition of similarities and ordered patterns, thus stimulating critical reflection and enquiry (Coffey & Atkinson 1996:32).

There is also the question of what types of coding categories to use. Strauss (1987) differentiates between sociologically constructed codes (externally applied) and in vivo codes (those that arise from the data itself). The latter comes from the terms and language used by the research subjects and can be used as a way of empowering and reducing the hierarchies of the research process. I have not approached the coding with pre-set coding categories, rather I have undertaken a coding approach which identifies themes and issues arising from the data and then linking these back into my

research questions – a type of interpretive knitting. In this way in vivo codes are drawn from the data and linked with the research questions which provide the intellectual context for critical reflection, questioning and analysis.

I identified themes and issues arising from the data and made sample codings of transcripts and research notes as I went along. The themes become subsections of chapter 4 (pp 79 – 98); chapter 5 (pp 118 – 127) and chapter 6 (pp 130 – 132). In the latter stages of data collection patterns began to form and I became aware that more detailed linguistic analysis of particular themes would be helpful to back up emerging lines of thought, for example to explore the linguistic evidence for seminar talk being a particular talk variety. Here I adapted a systemic functional linguistic approach to analysing extracts of data, generating both quantitative and qualitative findings. This was a new area of work for me and I found that my first tentative steps at coding moves and turns needed revision in the light of further reading and practice. I was also concerned at possible inconsistencies in this approach when data coding is carried out over two years. Therefore, at the end of the data collection period I re-coded all the extracts and thoroughly checked them to help to ensure consistency of approach.

A systemic functional linguistics approach

In the model of language as a social semiotic different types of meaning are enacted through talk and it follows that different analytical approaches need to be used to analyse these meanings (Halliday 1994a). Halliday identifies three meta-functions of talk:

- the *ideational* - meanings about the world, topics, subject matter;
- the *interpersonal* - meanings about relationships between speakers; and
- the *textual* - meanings about the message.

During pilot work I had identified that participants may experience difficulties in negotiating the 'requirements' of seminar talk since the context of the seminar is ambiguous - it is talk in a formal setting and for a specific purpose but it is also friends talking together. The language used will reflect individuals' understanding of the context and its requirements. In analysing language use, attention has to be given

both to exploring the functional elements of language abstracted from its context, in transcripts for example, and in exploring the impact of particular contexts on language use. A systemic functional linguistic approach is useful in conducting an analysis of such variables by exploring how people use language to achieve contextually appropriate goals (Halliday 1994b) and exploring particular elements of talk. Eggins and Slade argue that Haliday's three meta-functions of talk are in turn encoded in the contexts in which we use language through the concepts of genre and of register (1997:51). Register and its three variables of field, mode and tenor describes the immediate impact of context on language use and through exploring genre we can see how structures and sequences build to produce a culturally-understood text.

Identifying where seminar talk could be located along a continuum of formal and informal language is likely to be important in considering participants' negotiation of the context. The formality of language is determined by its context, the role of the interlocutors and the purpose of the exchange. Gee, following Bernstein, argues that formal language tends to be more explicit and *decontextualised* than informal language (Gee 1999:31). The seminar situation is both formal - in purpose and in context but is also informal in that peers, often friends, are sitting together chatting. There may thus be evidence of confusion among individual participants of the appropriate language register to be used.

To provide the 'extremes' of such a continuum I used a model identified by Eggins (1994) described in Table 3.3:

Table 3.3 Differentials of Informal and Formal language

Informal (and spoken) Language	Formal (and written) language	Register variable
Attitudinal lexis (purr and snarl words)	Neutral lexis	Linguistic consequences of TENOR
Colloquial lexis - abbreviated forms - slang	Formal lexis - full forms - no slang - politeness -phenomena	
Swearing		
Interruptions, overlap	Careful turn-taking	
First names, nick names, diminutives	Titles, no names	
Typical mood choices	Incongruent mood choices	
Modalisation to express probability	Modalisation to express deference	
Modalisation to express opinion	Modalisation to express suggestion	
Every day terms - words in every day use	Technical terms - words only insiders understand	Linguistic implications of FIELD
Full names	Acronyms	
Standard syntax	Abbreviated syntax	
Attributive (descriptive) process	Technical action processes (defining terms)	
Turn-taking organisation	Monologic organisation	Linguistic implications of MODE
Context dependent	Context independent	
Dynamic structure - interactive staging - open ended	Synoptic structure - rhetorical staging - closed, finite	
Spontaneity phenomena (false starts, hesitations, interruptions, overlap, incomplete clauses)	Final draft (polished)	
Everyday lexis	Prestige lexis	
Non-standard grammar	Standard grammar	
Grammatical complexity	Grammatical simplicity	
Lexically sparse	Lexically dense	

From Eggins (1994:49-80)

From this analysis the elements of the seminar as a particular educational genre with its own script, roles and narrative was explored.

However, in order to undertake a systemic functional linguistics analysis I needed to be able to explore linguistic markers as manifested in the speech of individuals. A systemics approach uses small pieces of dialogue which are then subjected to in-depth analysis. To carry out this work I needed to render my data more manageable and I therefore identified smaller extracts of seminar talk from the transcripts. From these

samples I was able to analyse specific linguistic features and link these back to my research questions. I chose one seminar from each of the five subject areas investigated and extracted the following two types of sample:

Sample 1: For each of these five subject seminars I identified one page of transcribed talk working from the mid-point of transcription. I chose this approach since often seminars were slow to build up and the early stages were likely to be more monologic and stilted. Latter parts of the seminar were more likely to tail off as the areas of discussion became exhausted. By using a mid-point I was likely to find more interactive speech providing richer data to support analysis of interactions between participants. This approach also ensured methodological consistency between the extracts. The outcomes of this analysis are discussed in Chapter 5 pp 104 – 116.

Sample 2: Using the same model described in sample 1, I identified a sample of uninterrupted talk from an individual. The first student who spoke in an uninterrupted block of approximately 60 words was chosen. I did not stop the sample mid-sentence and therefore the samples are not exactly the same size, ranging from between 61 – 95 words in length. The outcomes of this analysis are discussed in Chapter 4 pp 70 –79.

Sample 1 was used to undertake a conversation analysis of turns, moves and functions within the seminar event. Sample 2 was used to undertake a grammatical, lexical and semantic analysis of talk in the seminar event. The issues raised through this detailed analysis using small data samples were explored further within the general coding and analysis of all the data gathered through the research.

DATA ANALYSIS

Analysing discourse

Fairclough's work on the Critical Language Study (CLS) of texts is helpful in providing a framework for the analysis of discourse (Fairclough 1989). Fairclough uses the term 'text' to cover both written and spoken language and 'discourse' to refer to the process of social interaction of which the text as well as the process of its

production and of its interpretation are part. With spoken language texts, the analysis is usually confined to the written transcription of what is said. Fairclough's approach offers a focused way in to analysing the formal features of texts. Drawing on a Hallidayan framework, three categories are identified - vocabulary, grammar and textual structures - through which to focus analysis of the formal linguistic features of a written text (Fairclough 1989:110-111). Within these categories he identifies three types of value which formal features may have - experiential, relational and expressive. Experiential values provide a clue to the way a text producer's experience, knowledge and beliefs of the world are represented; relational values a clue to the social relationships which are enacted through the text and expressive values a clue to the producer's evaluation of social reality and identity. This approach has informed analysis of the transcripts.

The structural elements of dialogue

The data extracts in sample 1 were used to explore the following issues and are discussed in Chapter 5:

Moves and functions: what genre of talk is seminar talk? Seminar talk is not naturally-occurring informal conversation, (although I will argue that it retains features of casual conversation). It may have more of the characteristics of talk which accomplishes specific pragmatic tasks. It may be that seminar talk blurs the boundaries between conventions of written and spoken talk and may be more likely to display characteristics of the written form. It is artificial, constructed for a particular purpose, it has elements of ritual, it may result in or from a written form and it takes place within the ideological and physical confines of a classroom. Through this analysis the structural features of seminar talk are assessed.

Interpersonal relationships: the friendship patterns, power relationships and orientations of seminar participants to each other are likely to have a bearing on the type of talk used in seminars. Data on these relationships is gathered from observation, from group debriefs and from interviews and is supplemented by a

structural analysis of discourse markers of social and role relationships in the seminar talk.

The linguistic elements of dialogue

The data extracts in sample 2 were used to explore the following issues and are discussed in Chapter 4:

Grammatical, semantic and lexical choices. A critical issue surrounding the research questions is how far the language used by the students in seminars displays the specific characteristics of spoken academic discourse or of more naturally occurring talk. I identified a working definition of the linguistic characteristics of academic discourse and analysed samples of individual seminar participants' talk against this definition.

If there is evidence of academic discourse being used in the seminar, it would suggest that students are being positioned within the situated talk of the seminar into the values, practices and believes of the academic world. If the seminar talk has more of the characteristics of informal, casual conversation, then it is likely that the students are more engaged in identity development and maintenance.

Learning in the seminar

Learning in the seminar is likely to take many forms, learning about the topic, about processes and about managing interpersonal relationships. Analysis of the whole data corpus will explore how learning may be occurring in the seminar, for example through scaffolding, the use of exploratory talk and the use of academic discourse. However, I argue that a feature of seminars is their role as *display* and that, for example in using academic discourse students may be displaying to other students and tutors their competence, rather than developing understanding about the field of study.

A framework for analysis

The three foci of my research questions were to explore how far students in seminars were:

- learning about and demonstrating understanding of their subject – their 'subject mastery'
- demonstrating competence in using the register of academic language – their oral skills
- undertaking a performance where social roles and relationships are acted out, developed and maintained.

Through pilot work, the literature review and data coding, I identified three foci through which to approach data analysis linked to these questions - through exploring learning; interpersonal relationships and the seminar as a text in context. These formed a framework for that analysis and Table 3.4 summarises this approach:

Table 3.4: The cognitive, interpersonal and textual elements of seminar talk as a framework for analysis.

(1) LEARNING IN THE SEMINAR	(2) INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE SEMINAR	(3) META ANALYSIS: THE SEMINAR AS TEXT
- Use of academic discourse - Cognition - Transgressive moments	- Mapping Social Interactions - Motivation and identity markers	- Institutional framings - A formal or informal genre - Monologic, dialogic or heteroglossic texts

The three elements in this framework provide a set of analytical tools for working with the data within the socio-pedagogic space of the seminar as described in Figure 3.1, page 48. However it should be noted that there is overlap between the three elements of the framework. For example in their use of academic discourse students may be learning about framing argument and using evidence. However, instances where individual students use academic discourse will be affected by personal and interpersonal issues such as motivation and perception of self.

CHAPTER 4: LEARNING IN THE SEMINAR

THE LINGUISTIC MARKERS OF SPOKEN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

I explored in chapter 3 the potential link between learning and the use of academic discourse and in order to examine how far seminar subjects are using academic discourse, I needed to identify the linguistic markers of such a discourse and find a practical method for analysing them. Ivanic's work was helpful here, since she identifies linguistic features of student written work, which she argues are associated with the 'values beliefs and practices which are part of the institutional identity of the academic community' and constitute academic discourse (Ivanic 1997:259). These features are:

- Complexity. Using clause structure, Ivanic estimated the lexical density of student writing.
- Nominalisation. How far nouns were gathered into nominal groups. This characteristic is associated with knowledge compacting in academic discourse.
- Verb use. Process verbs which point to relationships between ideas and those who think or write about them. Ideas are often abstracted from lived experience in academic discourse.
- Tense. Where the use of the present tense 'functions to express timeless truths' (Ivanic 1997:269)
- Mood. The use of declarative mood positions writers as givers of knowledge or information which seek to influence others' knowledge rather than influencing their actions or asking for information.
- Modality. How far modality is categorical, stating absolutes, rather than being tentative, speculative. Ivanic argues that the use of categorical statements is an attribute that is perceived to be a characteristic of the academic community - whether it actually is or not.
- Lexis. The use of words which are specialised, whose use is determined by those who have specialist knowledge of the field – ie membership of the 'big word club' (Gardener 1992)

(Ivanic 1997:259)

Although Ivanic's work was based on written rather than spoken language, the focus academic discourse has sufficient similarities to my own study to provide a basis for analysing seminar talk. However, the different mode of language has different characteristics, and some modifications of, and additions to, the characteristics of spoken academic discourse were needed. Halliday makes the distinction for example between the different manifestations of complexity in written and spoken language:

> 'The complexity of the written language is its density of substance, solid like that of a diamond formed under pressure. By contrast, the complexity of spoken language is its intricacy of movement, liquid like that of a rapidly running river' (Halliday 1989:87)

Therefore in analysing complexity, it is likely that assessing the *grammatical intricacy* of talk will be as important as *lexical density*. Gee (1999) also identified connection-building in the *construction of argument* through the incidence of the use of particular words such as 'so', 'because', 'therefore', as an important indicator of how speakers articulate logical relationships between elements. The use of argument may be more prevalent in formal language registers than informal ones (see Table 3.3 for differences between formal and informal language).

A working typification of the lexical, structural and sequencing features in *spoken academic discourse* is outlined in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: Typification of spoken academic discourse

Feature	Linguistic evidence
1. Complexity.	Calculations of lexical density Calculations of grammatical intricacy
2. Knowledge compacting	How far nouns were gathered into nominal groups
3. Abstracted ideas	Use of process verbs which point to relationships between ideas and those who think or write about them. Use of abstract concepts Decontextualised language Pronoun use
4. Expression of truths and absolutes	use of the present tense categorical modality
5. Giving information or knowledge	The mood of clauses – use of declarative or interrogative rather than imperative or exclamative mood clauses
6. Specialist lexis	Use of technical or specialist words Assumed knowledge of subject area Words which have a deep taxonomy
7. Construction of argument	Use of words which link statements such 'as', 'so', 'because', 'therefore', 'however' Use of structure linked to syllogisms – eg stating a premise and a conclusion Functions and sequencing of moves

STUDENTS' USE OF ACADEMIC DISCOURSE (1)

Investigation was carried out using small extracts of transcribed seminar talk from level 2 and 3 modules (sample 2 as described on page 64). The extracts are presented in Figure 4.1

Figure 4.1: Extracts from seminars

Student 1: Stephanie - Cultural Studies

We've never met the grandfather before. We've never met him, we've never met her. She's the mother of Cath and Reg, right? And did you see the way that was going on? It was very clever because the camera brings you in, you're talking about a wider scale problem of homelessness, of overcrowding, and then the camera moves in to focus on him so we're back in the narrative, we're back in with him, but the wider couple have discussed about homelessness.

Student 2: Anna - Cultural Studies

The social realist films, A Kind of Loving for Example and Saturday Night and Sunday Morning you're not, I mean, you're not, its not like a neat introduction to this character, you know. They take you through their lives, you learn more and more about them, but if that's all we see of him, then that's not the same.

Student 3: Alice - Tourism

If you are after a short term fix, or if you are looking to a long term objective, which is what sustainability is all about, and how badly the multinational wants to come in of course, if they really want to get a foot in the country, then they must umm abide by government policies

Student 4: Lynne - Tourism

They don't really in a way because if the country is so like really don't have very much of an economy due to their like lack of industry, and the only industry that they like want is tourism, the multinational company will step in and the government will have to say like "OK, go ahead". Obviously they will be concerned about like what's going to happen to the country, but they need that money to provide jobs for people who live there.

Student 5: Katrine - Science

It would seem that it might be a good idea to go sooner rather than later, I think. Sometimes these complementary medicines are, after all, the conventional ideas, or something like that . I don't know how soon after she fell off the horse but it would seem it would be a good idea to go before the fear became so great that it starts impinging.

Student 6: Sheila - Science

I think if you had something and you had tried everything else, I think something like back pain, which wasn't life threatening, but nothing else was responding, I think you would probably try it then

Student 7: Simon - Media Studies

I want to come back to a question I posed earlier about um the misogynistic John Osborne saying how the female must come toppling down to where she should be – on her back. Now this person is creating social realist films. Do you think that because he is portraying social realism with the on-location shoots, the nice things like that, or do you think its more sinister, and it is actually portraying a more patriarchal realism?

Student 8: Alisha - Media Studies

A lot, I mean Britain was one of the last countries as well to have their women's movement, I mean like Europe, Italy and France and all of that emerged first, didn't it? So I think that they did follow their footsteps in that as well.

Student 9: Mark - Performing Arts

I mean, if you go to Northern Ireland, because the British government has become so involved in this whole peace thing and makes such a thing about Protestant and Catholic, they have said that a certain percentage of any company's employees has to be such and such.

Student 10: Stella - Performing Arts

She does say 'I've always put him first', which is kind of 'we don't do that anymore', but at the time you can understand where she is coming from. She is worried about her husband, but she does worry for herself, like she says she has had no sleep, she gets the brunt of it, but she wants him to provide for the family as well so I mean there's a bit of conflict in what she says.

Table 4.2: Profile of Students:

Number	Student	Subject seminar	Age	Gender	Ethnicity
1	Stephanie	Cultural	24	F	White
2	Anna	Cultural	23	F	White
3	Alice	Tourism	61	F	White
4	Lynne	Tourism	21	F	White
5	Katrine	Science	33	F	White
6	Sheila	Science	38	F	White
7	Simon	Media	29	M	White
8	Alisha	Media	21	F	Black
9	Mark	Performing Arts	21	M	White
10	Stella	Performing Arts	20	F	White

Complexity

Clause structure. Based on the premise that the academic community privileges 'solitary, premeditated, compacted, product-oriented meaning-making practices' Ivanic analysed the amount of information packed into clauses, that is the density of clauses used in student writing. (Ivanic 1997:260) She used a technique described by Halliday to calculate lexical density which involves calculating the number of clauses (a) and the number of lexical words (b) and dividing (b) by (a). A score of 2 equals low lexical density and a score of 5 or above high lexical density such as one

might find in an academic text. However, this analysis is targeted at written language and such an approach may not be appropriate for spoken language. Halliday argues that speech and writing have different ways of constructing complex meanings and generate different types of complexity - written language generating a static complexity and spoken language a dynamic complexity. While written language becomes complex by being lexically dense, spoken language becomes complex by being grammatically intricate, typically displaying a large number of clauses (Halliday 1994b:349). Grammatical intricacy is calculated by dividing the number of clauses in a text by the number of sentences. Eggins identifies the following comparison between spoken and written language:

Table 4.3:Density and intricacy in spoken and written language

Spoken Language	Written language
Low lexical density	High lexical density
Few content carrying words as a proportion	Many content carrying words as a proportion
High grammatical intricacy	Low grammatical intricacy
Many clauses per sentence	Few clauses per sentence

Eggins (1994:61)

The extracts in Figure 4.1 have been analysed for both types of complexity:

Table 4.4: Lexical density

	Students (identified by number see Table 6)									
Student Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No. of content carrying lexical words	42	31	25	37	32	21	35	17	20	30
No. of clauses	13	8	6	11	8	6	8	5	4	9
Lexical density	3.2	3.8	4.1	3.3	4	3.5	4.4	3.4	5	3.3

Table 4.5: Grammatical intricacy

	Students (identified by number see Table 6)									
Student Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No. of sentences	5	2	1	2	3	1	3	2	1	2
No. of clauses	13	8	6	11	8	6	8	5	4	9
Grammatical intricacy	2.6	4	6	5.5	2.6	6	2.6	2.5	4	4.5

In the extracts in Figure 4.1 no student had a lexical density score of over 5 however all have scores of over 3 and there is thus low lexical density. Six students have a grammatical intricacy score of 4 or above. This suggests there is more variation between individual students in the grammatical intricacy of their speech and it may suggest that complexity overall is being achieved more through grammatical than lexical means. However, in comparing the mean scores for lexical density and grammatical intricacy (Table 4.6) it is the convergence between the two measurements of intricacy and density which is most striking.

Table 4.6: Comparison of lexical density and grammatical intricacy

Total number of sentences	22
Total number of clauses	78
Total number of lexical words	290
Mean Lexical density	3.7
Mean Grammatical intricacy	3.5

This suggests that seminar talk appears to achieve complexity through a fusion of lexical and grammatical means. If so, there are likely to be other indicators, for example from the structural analysis of seminar texts which support this finding.

This methodological approach is not without its issues. Firstly the difficulty of accurately identifying content carrying words and secondly the difficulty of identifying sentences in spoken language. Although Halliday (1989) provides guidelines, there is no objective rule governing the identification of a clause or of a lexical item. I have identified all words which carry meaning as lexical words,

including nouns, the main part of the verb, adverbs and adjectives. In spoken discourse, identification of sentences is difficult and I have relied on intonation as a sentence marker. The coding of the primary data is therefore open to interpretation and is best seen as an indicator to be considered along with other analyses.

Knowledge compacting

While lexical density and grammatical intricacy provide a marker of complexity, knowledge compacting is also manifested by the use of nominalisation. Nominalisation is a way of abstracting ideas and reasons into condensed sentences, so that relationships which are expressed through clauses in spoken language are expressed through nouns in written language. This is usually achieved by turning verbs into nouns. Halliday gives the following example where a clause complex is replaced by a nominal group: "the viaducts were constructed of masonry and had numerous arches in them" becomes "masonry viaducts of numerous arches" (1994b:351). Nominalisation allows ideas to be abstracted from actions and actors resulting in more complex meaning and a denser text .

The extracts in Figure 4.1 had a low lexical density. Two of the student extracts use no nominalisations and of the other 8 there is a total of 29 giving a mean score of 2.9 nominalisations per student. This suggests that the extracts display few characteristics of knowledge compacting. However, this does not necessarily mean that through the language used, their ideas are more superficial than they would be in a densely compacted text. Halliday notes that when clausal patterns are replaced by nominal ones some of the information is lost (1994b:353). A point noted by Gee who emphasises that the call to clarity and explicitness in academic writing is largely illusionary and that the use of nominalisations and compression of meaning actually produce less precise meanings (Gee 1999). The high incidence of nominalisation in written language may serve to blur meaning, making it less rather than more precise and maybe providing cover for lack of understanding of content through a sophisticated use of language.

Abstracted ideas

In her analysis of student writing, Ivanic (1997) found examples of the use of verbs which describe the relational processes through which writers are identified with the interests of the academic community. That is, into the realm of ideas and intellectual activity and in the relationship between these and those who think or write about them. Verbs describing events which are grounded in actual experience and concerned with physical actions, mental processes or feelings are less likely to be found in academic writing.

In the extracts, there was more use of verbs which link to things, events or feelings rather than to ideas. This is likely to be because they are largely recounting events or texts and therefore the descriptions of concrete actions are key. Or they are putting forward explanations for particular phenomena where accounting for personal thoughts, feelings and interpretations is important.

There was however a use of abstract concepts, for example:

> *'narrative; homelessness; overcrowding; social-realist films; character; objective; sustainability; multinational company (2) ; government policies(2); economy; industry; tourism; complementary medicine; women's movement; misogynistic; Protestant and Catholic'*

which suggests that the language displays some characteristics of decontextualisation. Two students, Stephanie and Stella, used no abstract concepts but their extract was focused on describing and interpreting a scene from a film and a play where effective description is heavily reliant on reference to its context. Therefore their language use can be seen to be appropriate to the task.

Expression of truths and absolutes

The use of categorical modality can be seen as an indicator of certainty and most of the student extracts are in this mode. Examples include:

'will step in; will have to say; will be concerned; must abide by government policies; its not like; that's not the same; we have never met; will have to say; Britain was one of the last'

Although categorical statements may be interpreted by students as being part of academic discourse where a type of certainty is prized, this is actually unlikely to be the view of the academic community itself. In academic research, findings are often expressed as contingent and tentative. Use of a more tentative mode was found in the extracts from Katrine, *'it would seem (2); might be a good idea';* Sheila, *'probably try it';* and Stella, *'a bit of conflict'*. The use of the categorical mode may therefore be a marker of the novice status of the student participants while the use of a tentative mode a more sophisticated and learnt use of the contingent nature of academic discourse.

Giving information or knowledge

The dominant mood clause used was declarative, which suggests the imparting of information or opinion rather than seeking opinion or influencing actions. As in the expression of truths and absolutes, students may interpret declarative mood clauses which give information as part of academic discourse. It can certainly be seen to be part of a student role in typical classroom discourse where tutors ask questions and students provide answers. The use of declarative mood clauses can be seen as a marker of students enacting a familiar student role and also copying elements of a teacher role.

Four interrogative clauses were used - by Stephanie, Simon and Alisha. Stephanie's first interrogative clause, *'She's the mother of Cath and Reg - right?';* and Alisha's *'... all of that emerged first, didn't it?* are both in the form of 'tag questions', a phenomena which has been noted as a feature of women's talk (Coates 1994). Stephanie's clause is framed in a more assertive and rhetorical mode whereas Alisha's suggests a request for confirmation following a statement she appears to be uncertain of. Simon's question *'Do you think that because he is portraying social realism ... actually portraying a more patriarchal realism?'* and Stephanie's second question *'and did you see the way that was going on'* are both used in a teacherly fashion,

Simon prompting further debate and Stephanie pointing out a noteworthy feature rather than asking a genuine question. Using interrogative clauses which focus on particular issues, prompt further debate or check for understanding can be identified as features of classroom discourse and part of the teacher role. Where these are used in the absence of a teacher they may function as an indicator that students are recreating a typical classroom discourse in their practices - they are being positioned within the dominant discourse of academic life.

Specialist lexis

Given that students were discussing topics within their field of study it is likely that they would use specialist language. A few specialist words or terms were used which assume specialist knowledge within the group, for example, '*social-realist films; camera moves in to focus; narrative; economy; misogynistic; on-location shoots; patriarchal realism (list 1).* Other words used may be borderline in that they are in general use but require specialist knowledge in the particular context in which they are being used, for example *'multinational company; sustainability; character; homelessness; women's movement (list 2).* However, only five students used examples of specialise lexis in the first list (Stephanie, Anna, Simon, Lynne and Alisha) and Alice used words from the second list. Four students used no specialist lexis at all. Again this may be an indicator of varying familiarity with specialise language and different confidence levels within the student group.

Construction of argument

Individuals used argument constructing words to link clauses, for example, *'because; and, then, so, but, if, which is, then, due to.* These words are used to elaborate, extend, enhance, qualify statements and draw inferences and conclusions. The pattern of leading words in the clauses in Alice's extract,

'if.....
or if ....
which is....
and .....
if they .....
then'

suggests a 'classic' syllogism with a move pattern[1] of *opinion; extension; elaboration; extension; enhancement; conclusion.* However these strategies tend to be used by individuals in constructing their own point of view, adding evidence and positing possible outcomes. There was less evidence of debate between individuals using argumentative strategies. It may be that these novice debaters are colluding with each other in facilitating a practising of argumentative discourse strategies, putting points of view, with others agreeing rather than challenging each other with contrary arguments with the potential for the debate to become more risky. Such *talking to oneself* strategies provide a safe way of trying out ideas within a supportive peer environment.

Summary

Undertaking a detailed comparison of the small sample of extracts against the typification of academic discourse, it would appear that there is complexity within the discourse. Whilst there is little or no evidence for academic discourse features of knowledge compacting or abstracted ideas, there is evidence for the use of particular modality, mood clauses and specialist lexis and the construction of argument, which suggests that students are using academic discourse.

STUDENTS' USE OF ACADEMIC DISCOURSE (2)

The above detailed analysis of extracts from the seminars suggests that students are using academic discourse. Analysis of the broader data set of seminar observations, staff and student interviews and student group de-briefs identified a range of issues that are presented below.

Abstract rather than personal accounts:

There is some evidence that participants are adept at knowing and adopting the particular discourse appropriate for the seminar context. The students were usually able to adopt a distancing strategy between the personal realm, which includes

[1] see Table 5.2 for details of different speech function moves and their discursive purposes

emotions and opinions, and their seminar discussions. The use of 'I' was often ameliorated by reference to concepts particular to the subject area. The following example comes from a discussion of the impact of heritage tourism:

> Stephen I think heritage has an important role to play in the community, if its used for restoration of old buildings, it can be related to regeneration of ground and so on
>
> *Group I Tourism*

A statement of opinion is made, it is qualified and then a reason is given for the opinion.

Speculative rather than definite conclusions (tentative rather than categorical modes)

In discussing informal talk between children, Maybin notes the fluidity of the meanings and knowledge which children are jointly constructing which are provisional and frequently contested (Maybin 1994:148). There was evidence of this in the seminar groups, for example in the battlefield discussion in the tourism group where debate hinges on whether 'battlefield tourism' glorifies war or warns against it. Alice contests Tracey's assertion with a more measured analysis:

> Alice Oh I think people {like
>
> Tracey {well they glorify the battle fields like, don't they, its all glorified
>
> Alice well its, not necessarily, because so many battle fields are covered with memorials that people do see it as not really glory that hundreds of people did sacrifice their lives for the peace of their country and
>
> Tracey {that's true
>
> Alice {and its also "lets not do it again" and you know but you do have to sort out what's glorified and what isn't
>
> *Group I Tourism*

In a media studies group, there was a more mutually supportive debate about terminology and definitions of social realism which enables individual members to bring in differing views, leading eventually to some tentative ways forward. Such contingency is part of the debating discourse patterns of academic debate.

Simon	oh this film is social realism because just look at it we've shot it on location. They're just the aesthetic things but the things that really hit home are the things like when you do peel off that layer of {skin
Hilary	{the content of it,
	{yeah
Simon	{absolutely, and think its all very well saying they are social realism because in a sense they are but I think that they're socially misleading as well
Hilary	ummmm
Celia	I think so too (.)
Anna	I think a lot of the films of that period didn't represent society at all the way it was
Celia	( )
Anna	like you said, yeah like you said, like
Celia	they all look at the under belly of {society

Group D Media Studies

Both these examples start with categorical statements which are then un-picked and modified through discussion.

Use of subject specific terms, definitions, classification:

In the majority of seminar groups, participants used academic subject specific terms, for example in debating about definitions of social realism, the distinctions and implications of authentic and inauthentic heritage sites, the efficacy of complementary medicine. However, it is unclear whether these terms were used because they were needed to facilitate group understanding and convey particular specialist ideas or whether they were used as part of the *performance script* of the seminar.

There was a reluctance but also a knowingness amongst students about the 'requirements' to use specialist language

> "I don't like jargon of any kind. I cringe a bit if I have to use a word like paradigm
>
> *Student 5, Robert, interview*

Different subjects – different discourse?

Performing arts students did not use subject specific terms in their seminars, and most debate was on forming what could be understood as a collective personal responses to extracts from plays. This is in keeping with the performance-specific elements of performing arts on understanding characters and situations so that they can be interpreted on the stage. In this extract the discussion begins as a response to the idea that the author the play is making a point about religion being used as a way of preserving ignorance among people

Sara	and innocence, I think the parents … like the idea of having a virginal daughter
Dawn	but then they are more likely to be making mistakes
Sara	no but they like the thought of it … the idea that their child is pure
Dawn	yeah
Sara	and they are going to have a marriage …
Lianne	and I think the kids know more than they let on, they want their parents to have a good idea of them
Stella	yeah
Lianne	there are scenes in the playground, a few lads are involved and they are flirting with the lads as much as the lads are flirting with them
Stella	yeah
Lianne	I don't think its as naive as all that

Group L Performing Arts

The discussion moves from abstracted notions of the role of religion to the more general characteristics of personal relationships between parents and children. Lianne pulls them back to draw on the text of the play as the 'evidence base' for her idea that the girls in the play are deceiving their parents. Whilst this exchange does not use theoretical underpinnings, nor draws on more academic understandings of construction of narrative or character, it is clear that the seminar participants are developing their understanding of how these elements work within the play.

The differences between different fields of study was noted by Alice and Susan in interview who were both combined studies students and had experience of Tourism and Media Studies. They noted that the ethos of media studies was a "lot more relaxed" because "of the subject you are dealing with, you watch a lot of TV, you

question yourself more and what you bring to your viewing. It can't be as regimented as a business course" (Student 3 interview). The ethos of the subject area impacts on the focus of the seminar and on the type of discourse used – a particular issue in modular curricula discussed in Chapter 2.

Both these examples highlight the different philosophical approaches to studying in different academic disciplines, for example the value placed on presenting a personal response in the arts and humanities. This was backed up in the interviews with tutors in Cultural, Media and Performing Arts who all identified this as part of their aim. Indeed Matthew, explicitly uses seminars in Media Studies to highlight issues of personal subjectivity:

> "I am looking for a personal response but one which is grounded in a suitable contextual knowledge. The danger of the way that I work is that we get students spouting off their personal opinions in an uninformed and unhelpful and unacademic way. We are working to certain protocols about knowledge. But because of the area I work in, which I suppose I regard as being on the cutting edge of academic discourse in terms of that relationship between objective and subjective knowledge and in terms of using discourse types which are massively more informal than many other areas (sic). My approach is grounded in where I believe the discourse of media and cultural studies is, and the fact that really some of our best insights have to come from understanding where we are. New modes of masculinity, we are living all that. Empowering students to be themselves in a knowledgeable way is to me the potential that neither a tutorial or lecture have in the same way as a seminar"
> *Staff 2, Matthew, Interview*

This was different from the approach used in tourism where the focus was on learning effective presentation skills for a future work role. There was also considerable difference between groups of students and their working practices. Much was made of the differences between literary studies and performing arts and it appears that there are particular emic systems at work in these different subject groups (Pike 1964). The performing arts group were particularly 'bonded' with a strong group identity - a view endorsed by their tutor who had noticed the difference in peer group support between literary studies and performing arts students:

> Performing arts students tend to turn up to listen to other people .. because they feel they have bonded with the group and they probably feel that they should support their friends – they are

> their friends not just their peers … the literary studies group may have one or two friends but they are largely people who have never work together before so they don't feel a sense of loyalty.
> *Staff 3, Chris, Interview*

Different types and levels of participation can be seen to relate to the culture of the subject areas and the future for which students were being groomed. Performers work in intense situations of often short duration and their work is based on a collective ownership. They have to be able to make quick and deep relationships and to have high-level communication skills in order to produce high quality drama. The focus of literary work is individual, focusing on reading texts and where individual differences of interpretation are the essence of the domain of academic studies of literature. Clearly these two groups of students are being socialised in different ways which, if they are on a modular programme, will result in emic clashes when they attempt to work together.

COGNITION

Work by Vygotsky emphasises the role of talk in shaping understandings and extending knowledge through interaction with others. A key concept is his zone of proximal development (ZPD), and Bruner's parallel concept of scaffolding (Vygotsky 1978:86; Bruner 1978) discussed in Chapter 2. Learners can be scaffolded through the ZPD by teachers or more capable peers, and thus helped to move from an actual to a potential level of performance. If the seminar group supports deep learning and development through the ZPD, it is likely that there would be evidence of scaffolding between the group members. However, writers have cautioned that it is important to distinguish between general assistance and scaffolding; with scaffolding being defined as help given in pursuit of a specific learning activity with finite goals (Mercer 1994:97).

Recognising scaffolding in action however presents a challenge, although a multi-level model for recognising when scaffolding has taken place has been suggested (Maybin, Mercer and Stierer 1992). At the highest level there should be "some evidence of a learner having achieved some greater level of independent competence

as a result of the scaffolding experience" and at the lowest level there should be "some evidence of a learner successfully accomplishing a task (develop a skill; grasp a particular concept; achieve a particular level of understanding) with help" (Maybin et al quoted in Mercer 1994:97). I suggest that it is difficult to make judgements about the development of a greater level of independent competence based solely on the evidence of seminar talk. Such judgements require analysis of subsidiary data. This might include learner and tutor perception; written work, or data related to achievement. In analysing research data, my focus has been on identifying patterns of interaction where scaffolding and learning may be happening, not on exploring any causal links between student participation in seminars and other judgements about their development of understanding. However, it should be noted that in interviews some students felt that they had developed understanding of the subject through the seminars. Although, when pressed, they gave examples of being able to explore other students' research around the topic and gain a wider range of information rather than the development of conceptual understanding. One student felt that tutors use seminars "to encourage us to learn for ourselves" (Katrine, Science group debrief). No student identified learning about the subject as a benefit of participating in seminars – benefits were attributed to the development of skills and confidence.

Appletree and Langer identify five criteria for teachers to use to build scaffolding into school tasks:

> Intentionality – task has an overall purpose
> Appropriateness – task poses problems which can be solved
> Structure – questioning tasks support a structure of thought and language
> Collaboration – responses recast and expand on students' contributions
> Internalisation – scaffolding is gradually withdrawn as students internalise understanding.
>
> Appletree & Langer (1983:170)

While intentionality and appropriateness may be contained in the framing of the seminar, the other three elements would need to be realised through group dialogue, interaction and reflection. This is in line with other research on learning in small

groups which highlights the importance of questions and questioning in learning and in constructing shared meanings (Barnes and Todd 1977). Scaffolding moments may thus be identified through questioning sequences and collaborative development of understanding within group interactions as in the following exchange by science students (line numbers are included for ease of analysis):

162	Richard	I don't know about the tongue thing
163	Katrine	no
164	Sheila	Yeah I find that a little bit of a worry
165	Katrine	Perhaps the general condition of the tongue, might be if (its
166	Richard	(true
167	Katrine	rough, colour that kind of thing but (.)
168	Sheila	if that's the
169	Katrine	If you have got an ulcer on the tip of your tongue I don't
170		know if its going (to
171	Sheila	(affect your heart, yeah. Unless putting a
172		needle in here would affect another part of your body because you
173		have got all your nerves and things running (along
174	Katrine	(yeah
175	Sheila	connected and that (so
176	Richard	(they are deeper than (..)
177	Katrine	(yeah
178	Sheila	(yeah
179	Richard	a lot deeper than that, aren't they?
180	Tutor	That's true, you are not really - the size of those needles, they are
181		not getting really very far down, are they?
182	Richard	they are going sideways as well
183	Tutor	yeah
184	Richard	( ) pretty massive
185	Sheila	I don't know I've never actually seen it so (I wouldn't ()
186	Katrine	some of the needles are a lot longer but I think you're right that
187		they don't go in very far (do they? ()
188	Sheila	(the thought of sticking needles
189		- OK if I have to have a needle fair enough but if its not necessary

Group K Science

Katrine has presented a seminar paper on the use of acupuncture on pressure points to cure illness in another part of the body. The other students and tutor are sceptical.

In line 165 Katrine posits an hypothesis that the condition of the tongue could be an indicator of illness. She draws on other knowledge to make this point, providing some 'scientific' evidence for using the tongue as a pressure point to cure illness in other parts of the body. Richard supports this in line 166. Katrine then develops her analysis by posing a contradictory hypothesis in line 169 which is taken on by Sheila who gives an example in line 171. Sheila then develops the argument further by using some other scientific evidence of anatomy to suggest ways in which acupuncture could affect other parts of the body by connecting with nerves (lines 172 – 3 and 175). Richard picks up this theme with a contradictory point - suggesting that nerves 'are deeper' (line 176) and by implication would not be reached by an acupuncture needle. This elicits general agreement and he reiterates the statement (line 179). This is endorsed by the tutor who raises another point - whether acupuncture needles can reach deep seated nerves will depend upon the size of the needles (line 180). Richard counters this by raising a further point – that the needles don't just go downwards they also go sideways and suggests they would therefore have to be 'pretty big' to reach the nerves. Sheila raises a point related to the need for hard evidence to back up the debate about the size of the needles, she doesn't know how big they are because she hasn't seen an acupuncture needle. Katrine smooths over the discussion and provides a compromise conclusion - the needles are long but they don't go in very far. Sheila puts a final line under the debate by backing away into the realm of the personal response (line 188).

This example demonstrates a feature common among the seminar groups - the general avoidance of the use of direct questions in shaping understanding. Questions were often used in an indirect, implicit way. The above sequence is initiated by a personal statement which is an implicit question - 'what do you think about the tongue thing?', there are several other examples in the extract where statements are being used as indirect questions (lines 169, 171, 179, 180, 185). In analysing the role played by questions in developing group understandings, Barnes explores the use of general, yes-no questions or more specific wh-questions, (who, which, where, when, why) including the type of 'tag questions' shown above in lines 179 and 181). He found that the key element in the joint construction of understanding was the 'invitation to construct' issued to other group members to contribute. This was usually given by using questions, but the particular question form did not seem to matter (Barnes and

Todd 1977:125). In the seminar data it appears that questions framed as statements are understood by participants as an 'invitation to construct' and indeed may be favoured above direct questioning.

The science exchange also demonstrates a type of collaborative development of understanding through debate which was common to all the seminar interactions. Individuals raise points, provide evidence, shape hypotheses, query issues, issue challenges, draw on other knowledge and experience frames and make conclusions. Collectively the group moves to a new level of understanding.

'Failed' constructions of understanding

Where direct questions were used, they were often linked to a more formal type of academic discourse, used specialist lexis and tended to take on a connotation of teacherly behaviour. In the following exchange performing arts students are discussing *Miss Saigon* and Belinda tentatively frames a question suggesting that the narrative and the characters function as a metaphor for American imperialism (lines 129-131). The responses suggest that her co-students have not understood her question, and may be struggling with the concept of metaphor, but they do not challenge her. Instead Stella provides a not very convincing agreement, Belinda extends her views and Clive latches on to a literal interpretation of the question and brings in some personal evidence.

129	Belinda	Do you think that shows how America the country as well, itself, that's its
130		like a metaphor for how the country, how America, treated the oriental
131		countries, like they treat their women basically? Do you think that's, you
132		know, that's used? (I think
133	Stella	(yeah
134	Belinda	I think that's a major thing throughout
135	Clive	like the actually ladies themselves are very submissive in I mean I have known a lot of American GI guys in the past who have gone over there and found a wife.

Group L Performing Arts

Here the group miss an opportunity to take their understanding to another level. Fisher identified effective educational talk being dependent upon mutual understanding of the purpose of the talk and common aims amongst participants (Fisher1996). While the framework of the seminar may specify purpose (although I will argue that seminars are weakly specified), individual participants are likely to have different, personal, aims, for example to avoid embarrassment or to display knowledge. Different groups may also have particular aims, for example they may be more interested in developing their social interactions, keeping the discussion going, providing support for each other and not issuing calls for clarification, even though this would develop subject understanding. Belinda's initial hesitancy may have produced a nervousness amongst her peers - does she know what she means and if asked will she be able to respond?

In discussing the characteristics of pupil to pupil talk, Fisher (1994) identifies three types: cumulative talk; exploratory talk and disputational talk. While the Science example above is an example of exploratory talk where ideas are offered, accepted and extended, the Performing Arts example is closer to cumulative talk. Fisher notes that of these three types, only the *exploratory* type of talk offers the possibility for learning, in that it contained challenge, suggestions, counter-challenges, modification and thereby an extension of understanding by group members. *Cumulative* talk, where each speaker accepts unconditionally the previous input lacks the challenge necessary for learning to take place. *Disputational* talk was characterised by negative challenges which failed to build on successive inputs or gather consensus.

The performing arts example also has similarities to the characteristics of children's informal talk, found by Maybin (1994):

> " Children complete each others' utterances, repeat something another child has just said ... Meanings do not seem to be generated within one mind and then communicated through talk; rather, they are collaboratively and interactionally constructed between people (Maybin 1994:147)

There were many examples of this type of talk in the seminars with considerable evidence of collaboration between these particular learners. Construction of meaning

are often shared the within the group. The prevalence of an overly collaborative style that uses cumulative talk strategies could militate against deep learning processes.

The seminar as a collaborative event was emphasised in interviewee's talk about the seminars, in particular the prevalence of the collective pronoun, 'we'; for example, *"I was surprised at how much we actually knew"* (Student 3 Interview, Susan*); "we have moved on so much"* (Student 2 Interview, Tracey*); "We tried really hard not to duplicate"* (Student 1 Interview, Alice).

<u>On the difference between writing and speaking</u>

Both Alice and Tracey from the tourism group felt that it was more important to understand the subject matter when participating in a seminar group than in written work:

> Tracey I think yeah there is a difference when you are actually writing it you don't have to actually understand what you are writing but when you are talking you have to understand what you are saying.
>
> *Student 2 Interview*

> Alice Well when you are writing an essay you have got books to help you and you're sitting and you're thinking aren't you, but this had got to be much more spontaneous really and you have really got to know….. you know only really speak about things you know about. And you have got to be able to align the theory with the practical discussion
>
> *Student 1 Interview*

For individual participants the anxiety of 'speaking the language' of the subject may provoke greater preparatory work and engagement with theories and concepts in order to feel confident in discussion. For Clive, it is speaking which helps thought processes *"when you actually say it yourself, as you are going through the thought process, you are justifying what you believe when you say it out loud"* (Performing Arts group debrief)

Some students felt that the oral mode enabled them to extract different points from the topic than the more crafted written mode. *"I think you tend to get a more broad spectrum and go less deep in a presentation"* (Richard, Science group debrief). "*Having a discussion like this you tend to realise the issues in the play*" (Stella Performing Arts group debrief). Seminars were not seen as an 'easy' option, *"I am always amazed at how much longer it takes to prepare for a seminar"* (Katrine, Science group debrief)

The comments made by many students suggest that their perception of learning is about "getting information" and they are judging the learning potential of the seminar by the same standard. Robert made the point that in seminars participants can share different perspectives on the subject - *"other students have a slightly different angle on it - you get a better balance"* (Student 5 Interview, Robert).

However, for some students the process of participation and the opportunities to compare self with others raised feelings of inadequacy. This was felt acutely by Holly, *"I understand most of (their opinions) but then afterwards I'm like 'what'??"* A point she returned to later in the group session, *"its like big words and I'm just like 'what are you talking about'?* (Tourism group debrief).

Others felt that social and interpersonal learning was going on, which helps build respect for other's opinions. Stephen *commented "I think we learn more about each other than the area of study"* (Tourism group debrief) A point echoed by Mark *"I think (the seminar) helped expand people's knowledge of the plays but it does even more than that, it expands people's knowledge about each other"* (Performing Arts group debrief). However, often the process of engagement with peers dominated and this left little room for learning about the subject. *"You're not actually listening to them, just hearing the next point for you to talk about. Just noises you're making at each other to keep the discussion going"* (Student 4 Interview, Stephanie). Opportunities for learning appear to be constrained by the interpersonal power dynamics of the seminar event.

All the student groups felt that practising seminars helped them to conquer their nerves. Many reflected on their earlier attempts and remembered the fear and anxiety

they had experienced, for instance, *"it was harder earlier on. Scary"* (Stella, Performing Arts group debrief).

The majority of students felt that participating in seminars was a necessary evil. They didn't enjoy them but felt they did them good. The benefits cited were practising communication skills; gaining in confidence; preparation for the world of work; presentational skills, conquering nervousness in public. Seminars thus appear to have added value to the student experience.

TRANSGRESSIVE MOMENTS

There were moments when seminar participants slipped 'out of role' which was marked by their using a tenor[2] more associated with informal language. The types of markers were attitudinal (purr and snarl words) and colloquial lexis (swearing) and modalisation which expresses opinion. There appear to be a number of causal factors which prompt this code switching, including the subject matter under discussion, the use of personal position-taking, statements based on personal experience.

When the topic under discussion was in the realm of the personal or sexual, participants were more likely not to use academic discourse. While personal perspectives provide an effective opportunity to put forward a critique of the text, articulating these was more likely to take students away from using academic discourse. The following is an encounter in performing arts where the group is discussing a play which explores women in leadership positions in business:

Clive	Do you think you would feel the same if he had a male boss
Ruby	no
Clive	is it just (because
Karen	(no
Clive	its female
Karen	I think yeah it clearly shows that
Ruby	Howard
Karen	its sexist

[2] see Table 3.3 for a definition

Ruby should get a grip
Dawn he's obviously
Shelly I suppose
Dawn of the old school isn't he
Shelly (ummm
Karen (yeah
Group L Performing Arts

The initial prompt comes from Clive, (one of two men in the seminar, the remaining 13 were women) who triggers a rallying of a collective female response with four of the female participants. The discussion continues along fragmenting gender lines:

Shelly if she's just been employed because there's this trend of making female bosses then I'd be just as pissed off as he is
Clive then there'd be no females in jobs then
(at this point the women hiss and then giggle)
Clive I knew I shouldn't have said that
Mark watch out Stella's beside you
Stella You're one male and, and
Mark I'm sorry, it was quite personal
Group L Performing Arts

Personal responses which display attitude were the most common form of movement away from the use of academic discourse. The following example is from Media Studies (personal responses are underlined):

Simon Oh Look Back in Anger, sorry
Celia <u>I thought that was a horrible film</u>
Group D Media Studies

Celia's response is a personal opinion unmediated by evidence or distancing strategies. Opinions were unlikely to support further discussion and tended to bring the debate to a halt.

Alice Yeah but It did start, I mean it is based a) its Poldark its obviously from the famous books by Winston Graham but I mean it did start off with an authentic idea for a mine park and they issue the old mining certificates when you go in. But as a family day out it's wonderful.

Group I Tourism

Alice's comment at the end of this sequence is a statement based on personal experience. These types of intervention did not halt debate although other participants were not likely to respond directly to them. In performing arts, the subject area under discussion was only understood through reference to the realm of personal experience or opinion and this influenced the tenor and mood of the whole seminar particularly in the much more overt use of swearing and other 'prohibited' words.

These instances link to Labov's findings that emotional subject areas influence the speech variety used (Labov 1963). In the seminar it can be argued that participants tend to use the 'non-standard' non-academic speech variety to discuss these matters. It could be argued that what links these examples is their relationship to personal experience and that where personal experience is involved students have difficulty in keeping up their academic persona. From a Goffmanian perspective, they are forgetting their lines (Goffman 1959).

Rescuing transgressions

Group members used particular conversation management strategies to deal with moments of transgression from academic discourse. It appears that when one participant adopts a more colloquial pattern of speech, another participant will interpret what was said using academic discourse. For example, in the following example from tourism:

Lynne they're all working, working to get people in, to keep the money coming in, Yes, to show people what happened, to educate people, but a lot of it is to ( ) preservation and conservation purpose, so that they can survive for the next generation because, without profit, they can't carry on

Alex So in effect, inauthentic measures of getting people in are in turn helping – help - to keep it perhaps just partially authentic,

Group I Tourism

Although Lynne's comments are pertinent to the argument and flow of the seminar, they are presented in a colloquial, unstructured way. Alex reshapes her discourse into an academic framing and in so doing positions himself into a teacherly role and Lynne into a student role.

In the following example, Celia breaches several of the conventions of an educational setting by swearing, putting a personal perspective and making an assertion without corroborating evidence. By so doing betraying her passion and commitment to a feminist viewpoint. This section is in turn reframed by Simon into what he considers a more appropriately academic discourse:

Simon	do you think that films like this, or perhaps not films like this, but the ideas of men towards women actually helped the feminist movement along?
Celia	Oh incredibly,
Hilary	{yeah
Anna	{yeah
Celia	absolutely incredibly, because nobody is going to put up with that much shit for that long
All	Ummm
Simon	so that, that comes back to your censorship thing I think as well doesn't it? Because its like that these were portrayed on screen. We saw the mistreatment of women; we saw the mistreatment of homosexuals; we actually thought {what
Hilary	{what's happening
Celia	{injustice somewhere
Carole	{definitely

Group D Media Studies

Such reframings suggest a collective understanding of the codes of seminars and a collective 'policing' of each others discursive strategies, so that if one member uses 'inappropriate discourse', another will put in place a 'rescue' strategy. Although, particular individuals are more likely to use academic discourse than others, there is evidence that no one individual plays the 'rescuer role', but that this is collectively owned.

Interviews with student participants makes it clear that there is a common awareness that the purpose of the seminar is to demonstrate competence in the use of academic discourse for the benefit of the watching tutor. As such the seminar constitutes a kind of *display* similar to that found by Myers (1998) in focus groups. In displaying academic discourse, participants are also modelling their behaviour and discourse strategies from the role model of the tutor, as Tracey explains:

> "I tried to speak academically, tried to speak with authority or with knowledge rather than just chit-chat, informal .....Vera *(the tutor)* is Godlike - I think we look up to Vera"
>
> *Student 2 Interview, Tracey*

The 'group rescue strategy' only appears to be put into action when the transgressor is seen to be acting as part of the group endeavour to achieve its common purpose. On one occasion this was not the case and a student raised a point which was critical of another student:

> Leah Can I make a point quickly – when its in my head – can you not do that, its really off putting
>
> Tracey do what?
>
> (Other students – "Jeez")
>
> Leah at the end when you have finished
>
> Tracey Can I not do it?
>
> Leah yeah 'cos it makes everyone laugh
>
> Tracey I think we have touched on the social side and economic regeneration when we come back from the break we can develop that more.
>
> *Group I Tourism*

Leah is referring to Tracey acting as chair and summing up. Her chairing role had been agreed by the other students prior to the seminar but Leah had not been part of this agreement - she was often absent from class. Leah's comment can be seen *as out of role*, she moves away from discussing the topic to make a personal comment on a peer. The other students appear to regard this as an inappropriate interjection which instigated much muttering and shaking of heads. Tracey's response is to continue 'in role' and indeed to emphasise the teacherly aspects of the chairing role by ignoring the comment, refocusing on the task and initiating the coffee break. At interview I asked Tracey about this incident, who added this perspective:

> Tracey I know she didn't understand my role, its not her fault, well it is she should have gone to the lectures. At coffee break she said she hoped she hadn't upset me. The others mentioned it and they were saying it was the wrong thing to do 'how unprofessional' and I said 'well I suppose it was'.
>
> *Student 2 Interview, Tracey*

This suggests that transgressions which involve 'unprofessional' behaviour are not sanctioned and group rescue strategies not set in place. This demonstrates a common understanding of the purpose of seminars as a preparation for future work roles and also of the 'professional' role of a student - to turn up to lectures, go through the process of preparing for group work and 'play the seminar game' - those that do not, risk falling outside of group support.

SUMMARY

In the chapter a model of academic discourse was identified through which to explore in detail the lexico-grammatical choices made by students. Analysis suggests that seminar talk does display some of the characteristics of academic discourse particularly in participants' use of specialist lexis and in the construction of argument. Seminars have a complex structure yet this complexity is gained through a fusion of grammatical and lexical strategies. In their structure, seminars appear to constitute a particular *hybrid talk variety*, occupying a space between spoken and written language.

In the seminars there was evidence of argumentation and exploratory talk and it is clear that seminars constitute a setting rich in learning opportunities. Participants use seminars to practise putting together arguments, sometimes adopting the strategy of 'talking to themselves' rather than through debate. There were 'scaffolding' instances where peers helped each other to reach greater levels of understanding but there were also many missed opportunities for learning.

The focus on collaborative discourse strategies, such as the joint construction of argument, accompanied by strong peer group support militates against a more combative, challenging approach which would better support the scaffolding of

deeper learning. Students' orientation to the seminars was focused on gaining information rather than developing critical reasoning. In the absence of clear specification of the purposes of the seminars, this orientation informed their seminar engagement. However, participants also used the seminar as a resource for developing their confidence and other personal skills and for the maintenance of interpersonal relationships. Students were aware of the judgemental role of the watching tutor and employed strategies to 'police' and rescue transgressive moments, suggests that there was understanding of what it takes to 'play the seminar game' (Buckingham 1991). However, the seminar as an event tends to function as a form of *display* for the watching tutor, rather than an opportunity for learning through argument.

CHAPTER 5: INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE SEMINAR

THE STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF SPOKEN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE: A FUNCTIONAL-SEMANTIC APPROACH

Following Halliday (1984; 1994b) a functional-semantic interpretation of the discourse moves in samples from seminar talk was undertaken. Halliday argues that when people interact through language they establish a relationship which positions both the speaker and potential respondents. So when individuals initiate a conversation by asking a question they assign a complementary role to the person being addressed to answer the question. The choice of responding move is constrained by the initiating move and Halliday argues this becomes a process of exchange rather than an interaction. The commodity being exchanged is either information, goods or services with corresponding roles of either giving or demanding thus setting up a series of 'agency pairs' (Halliday (1984:11). Processes of exchange also involve issues of differential status and power.

Chart 5.1: Speech Function Agency Pairs

Initiating speech function	**Responding speech functions**	
	Supporting	*Confronting*
Offer	Acceptance	Rejection
Command	Compliance	Refusal
Statement	Acknowledgement	Contradiction
Question	Answer	Disclaimer

Eggins & Slade (1997:183 adapted from Halliday (1994b)

Halliday makes a link between speech functions and the context in which the exchange takes place through an examination of grammatical patterns used in the exchange. The social role that participants occupy in the seminar interaction will constrain the speech functions they have access to. For example the social role of

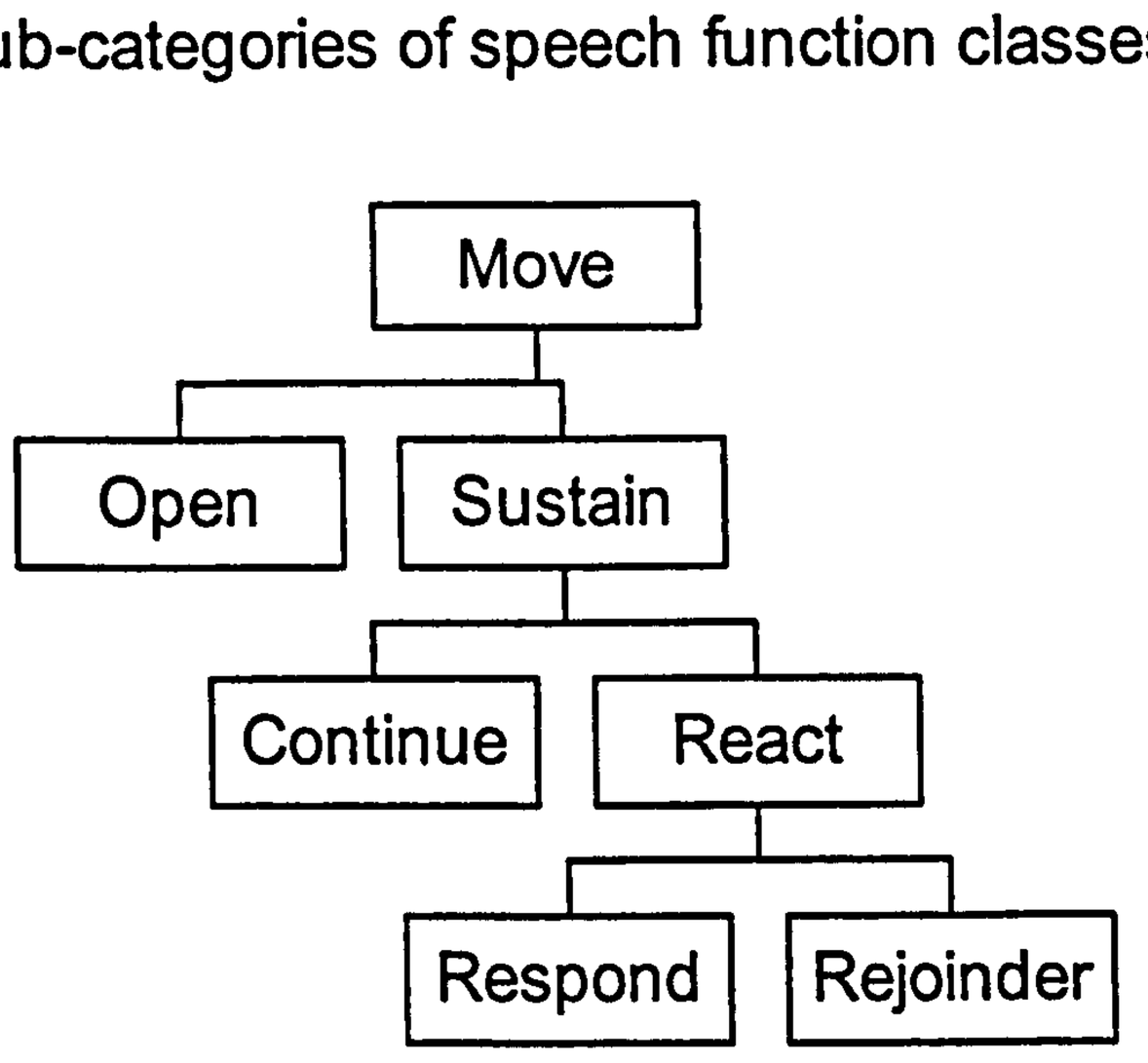
doctor enables a different range of speech functions than that of patient. This could be manifested grammatically by a doctor making an initiating move which is a command such as "take your clothes off" - not an opening move option usually available to a patient. By mapping grammatical choices against speech functions it is possible to build up understandings of the dialogic context of the interaction.

Halliday argues that within dialogue discourse patterns of speech functions can be understood through *moves*. Moves are the discourse units which accomplish particular functions and are different from *turns* as understood in conversation analysis. Turns are defined as all the talk produced by a speaker before another speaker comes in. One turn may contain a number of different moves. In the doctor-patient example above, the patient's turn could include a response such as "OK" (a move signalling agreement) "Where do I go?" (a move seeking further information).

There are a number of option moves available to participants engaged in dialogue. To start, one participant will need to move to open up a sequence of talk, the options thereafter are for the current speaker to keep on talking or for another participant to take over the speaking role. Each move within this framework can be sub-classified in terms of the type of function which the move achieves - a network described in Figure 5.1. A move which reacts can respond or rejoin (throw the move back to the first speaker) and can do so in a supportive or confrontational way. A supportive response can be further subdivided in terms of whether it develops, engages, registers or replies and so on to create an ever more detailed analysis of the turn taking moves[1] within the sequence (Eggins & Slade (1997:213)

[1] See Table 5.2

Figure 5.1 Overview of the speech function network:



Eggins & Slade (1997:192)

In research into small group dialogue in classrooms, four discourse moves have been identified - initiating, extending, eliciting and responding (Barnes and Todd 1977:28-36). However, this approach is particular to formal classroom settings and didn't allow for the range of moves which seminar participants may make. I felt it was important to analyse the seminar moves in a way which supports comparison with the patterning of moves in other formal and informal discourse types.

I also wanted to explore discourse moves and functions from the point of view of how they provide linguistic evidence for the role relationships of participants. Analysis using speech function relates to the register variable of tenor and expose issues such as status relationships between participants - how far along a power continuum the participants are located; affective involvement - the extent to which participants are emotionally or personally committed to each other, and the frequency of contact between participants - how well they know each other. I therefore chose to adapt the

approach used by Eggins & Slade which uses a taxonomy of types of opening and sustaining moves and their sequencing (Eggins & Slade 1997). Table 5.2 provides a summary of these speech function moves and their discourse purpose. The table provides the basis for coding of speech function choices in the five seminar group extracts (sample 1 described on page 64). Analysis using this approach provides data from which I explore participant relationships. From the analysis of the comparative *number* of turns and moves made by the seminar participants it was possible to explore dominant and incidental participants. Analysis of the different *categories* of moves made it was possible to explore the roles taken by individuals within the seminar exchange - how is talk initiated, prolonged, developed, curtailed.

Table 5.2: Speech function moves and their discourse purposes (from Eggins & Slade (1997:194-214)

Speech Function Moves	Discourse Purpose
Opening:	
Attending	Attention seeking
Offer	Give goods and services
Command	Demand goods and services
Statement: fact	Give factual information
Statement: opinion	Give attitudinal/evaluative information
Question: open: fact	Demand factual information
Question: closed; fact	Demand confirmation/agreement with factual information
Question: open; opinion	Demand opinion information
Question: closed: opinion	Demand agreement with opinion or information
Continue	
Monitor	Check audience is still engaged
Prolong: elaborate	Clarify, exemplify or restate
Prolong: extend	Offer additional/contrasting information
Prolong: enhance	Qualify previous move by giving details of time, place, cause, condition etc
Append: elaborate	Clarify, exemplify or restate previous move after intervention by another speaker
Append: extend	Offer additional/contrasting information to previous move after intervention by another speaker
Append: enhance	Qualify previous move after intervention by another speaker
React: responding: supportive	
develop: elaborate/extend/enhance	(as in **Continue** section)
engage	Show willingness to interact by responding to salutation etc
register	Display attention to the speaker
reply: accept	Accept offered information, goods or services
comply	Carry out demand
agree	Indicate support of information given
answer	Provide information demanded
acknowledge	Indicate knowledge of information given
affirm	Provide positive response to question
React: responding: confronting	
Disengage	Indicate unwillingness to be involved
reply: decline	Refuse offer of information, goods or services
non-comply	Indicate inability to comply with question
disagree	Provide negative response to question
withhold	Indicate inability to provide demanded information
disavow	Deny acknowledgement of information
contradict	To negate prior information
React: rejoinder: supportive	
Track: check	To gain a repeat of misheard element or move
Confirm	To verify information heard
Clarify	To get additional information needed to understand prior move
Probe	To volunteer further details/implications for confirmation
Response: resolve	To provide clarification, acquiesce with information
React: rejoinder: confronting	
Challenge: Detach	To terminate interaction
Rebound	To question relevance, legitimacy, veracity of prior move
Counter	To dismiss addressee's right to his/her position
Response: unresolve: refute	To contradict import of a challenge
re-challenge	To offer alternative position

MAPPING SOCIAL INTERACTIONS THROUGH SPEECH FUNCTION ANALYSIS

This section provides an analysis of 5 seminar extracts (sample 1 described on page 64) of speech function and sequencing of moves. The full coding of each of these samples is provided in the appendices with a summary provided in Tables 5.3 – 5.7 below. An analysis of the patterns revealed in the data follows each table.

Table 5.3: Summary of speech functions in sample 1 for Group C (Cultural Studies)

Speech function	**Stephanie**	**Robert**	**Anna**	**Maggie**	***Total***
No. of turns	9	4	6	1	***20***
No. of moves	27	11	12	2	***52***
No. of clauses	40	11	16	3	***70***
Types of Move					
Opening moves	4	0	1	1	***6***
Continuing moves	18	5	3	1	***27***
React: responding: supportive	2	3	3	0	***8***
React: responding: confronting	0	0	0	0	***0***
React: rejoinder: supportive	1	0	4	0	***5***
React: rejoinder: confronting	2	3	1	0	***6***

Analysis of Table 5.3:

- Dominant and incidental participants: Stephanie, Robert and Anna are the dominant members with Maggie playing a subsidiary role.
- Number of turns: Stephanie has the most turns. Maggie's contribution is marginal with only1 turn.
- Number of moves: Again Stephanie has the most moves, followed by Anna. Stephanie just gets the most moves from her turns (an average of 3 against Roberts 2.75 moves per turn) and could be said to be *speech functionally dominant (* getting more moves into her turns)..

- Number of clauses: Stephanie has more than double the number of clauses than Anna who is next in the list and she produces more clauses per moves and therefore has more airspace and gets more value from her role as a speaker compared to Robert who gets little value from his talk.
- Openings: All participants except Robert make opening moves but Stephanie far exceeds the others with 66% of opening moves belonging to her. Statements of opinion are the only opening move category for Anna and Maggie but Stephanie uses a wider range, such as factual statements and questions. However, her questions are closed suggesting a controlling dominance which doesn't invite risk which would come from asking open questions.
- Continuing moves: Again Stephanie dominates with 66% of continuing moves. Both she and Anna use monitoring moves to check whether the others are still involved. Stephanie uses a lot of extensions (11 moves) which work to broaden and extend the discussion. She also uses a lot of elaborations (5 moves) which provide clarification, restating and exemplifying previous statements or positions. The use of elaborations can be seen as a neutral way of continuing the dialogue and of holding the talk space, while not contributing much to broadening the discussion. The use of extensions adds to the information or provides contrasting information and the use of enhancements qualifies or modifies previous information often providing causal detail. The use of extensions and enhancements can be seen to be strategies which broaden the discussion and provide ammunition for argument and debate. Three out of five of Robert's continuing moves are elaborations, and elaborations are also used by Maggie and Anna suggesting that the neutral role of this type of move may make elaborations the move of choice for less dominant group members who want to prolong the discussion.
- Responding reactions: These reactions move the dialogue towards closure, whilst rejoinder reactions open up and prolong the exchange. The close ratio of responses to rejoinders (8:11) for this group suggests that these participants are fairly evenly split between keeping the discussion going and moving to a resolution. All responding moves are supportive which suggests a disinclination for overt confrontation or disagreement. Anna and Robert use the most responding reactions, the majority of these are submissive agreements or

acknowledgements, although Anna does use registering reactions, which provide support and encouragement for other members to take another turn. Development moves are co-operative conversational strategies and Stephanie has the one developing move, demonstrating a co-operative approach.

- Rejoinder moves: Anna makes the most rejoinder moves - 5 out of 11. Three of these are tracking moves which prolong the exchange in a neutral way. This backs up Anna's role as a quiet 'mover'of the discussion. Stephanie, Robert and Anna make confronting moves. These types of move have the potential to extend and sustain the interaction since they bring in challenges to previous moves which necessitates a response. It has been suggested that rejoinder moves imply an independence of the speaker and their function as a catalyst to further talk enables them to contribute to the development of interpersonal relationships (Eggins & Slade (1997:213). However, these moves also indicate the use of argument and discussion with challenge and counter claim being made which in turn elicits and embeds position taking, setting up a framework for debate.

Summary: The role differences can be summarised as follows:

- Stephanie dominates through her use of opening and continuing moves. Her response moves are less frequent and weaker in type, suggesting she plays less of a role in maintaining the exchange.
- Robert offers the most challenge to Stephanie in his use of rejoinder moves, although these are tempered by submissive response strategies of agreeing and acknowledging. This suggests that he may be using these response moves as a politeness, conciliatory strategy so as not to cause personal offence through his challenges, or maybe the politeness move is a way of avoiding 'face threatening acts' and minimising the risk of threatening confrontation. Robert is keen to maintain his defences, (move 9b) 'I'm not knocking' (ie your point of view), before he puts his point of view.
- Anna's role is to provide the supportive glue to the conversation, facilitating the continuance of the talk and encouraging others to take turns. She comes to Robert's aid (move 7), confronting Stephanie for him and paving the way for his rebounding challenge (move 9).

- Maggie takes an outsider's role. She does not interact with the others. Her two moves make and continue an opening, which provides a summing up of the other's debate. Her role appears to be a watching one, and her input a teacherly, chairing one.

This group was the only one which had more rejoinder than responding moves, suggesting that the participants were comfortable in each other's company and keen to keep the debate going – a point noted in student 4 interview.

Table 5.4: Summary of speech functions in sample 1 for Group D (Media Studies)

Speech function	**Simon**	**Celia**	**Carole**	**Hilary**	***Total***
No. of turns	12	7	1	6	***26***
No. of moves	17	14	1	9	***41***
No. of clauses	19	19	1	10	***49***
Type of Move					
Opening moves	1	1	0	3	***5***
Continuing moves	5	7	0	4	***16***
React: responding: supportive	7	5	1	0	***13***
React: responding: confronting	0	0	0	0	***0***
React: rejoinder: supportive	3	0	0	2	***5***
React: rejoinder: confronting	1	1	0	0	***2***

Analysis of Table 5.4

- Dominant and incidental participants: Simon dominates closely followed by Celia with Hilary playing a subsidiary role and Carole having minimal input.
- Number of turns: Simon has the most turns. Carole's contribution is marginal with only1 turn.
- Number of moves: Simon has the most moves, closely followed by Celia, but Celia gets the most moves from her turns (an average of 2 against Simon's 1 and Hilary's 1.5) and could be said to be *speech functionally dominant*.
- Number of clauses: Simon and Celia share having nearly double the number of clauses than Hilary. But Hilary just produces more clauses per move and

therefore has more airspace per move and gets more value from her role as a speaker. Carole gets little value from her talk.

- Openings: All participants except Carole make opening moves with Hilary making 60%. Simon and Celia's opening moves are statements of opinion whereas Hilary uses a wider range, including statements of fact and open questions. This suggests that Hilary's role is more assured and facilitative of group processes than Simon or Celia.
- Continuing moves: All participants except Carole are fairly evenly matched. Simon, Celia and Hilary all use prolonging moves entailing elaborations or extensions. Simon uses the most elaborations which are a way of holding the talk space, while not contributing much to broadening the discussion. Celia is the only one to use enhancing moves which qualifies or modifies previous information. This, combined with her use of monitoring moves, suggest that Celia's role is less dominant and more dependent on others' initiation.
- Reacting moves: The ratio of responses to rejoinders (13:7) for this group suggests that these participants are keen to move the discussion to a resolution, less keen on keeping debate going. All responding and rejoinder moves are supportive which suggests a disinclination for overt confrontation or disagreement. Hilary only uses rejoinder moves which are supportive thus suggesting Hilary is an assured, confident participant. Carole's only responding move is to agree, emphasising her submissive role. Both Simon and Celia's use of agreeing responding moves emphasise the supporting role they play. Both Celia and Simon use a rejoinder move to re-challenge, however this is moderated by Simon's use of tracking rejoinder roles, suggesting that his is a more emollient group role than Celia.

Summary:

- Hilary plays an initiating role through her use of opening and continuing moves but offers little thereafter, not involving herself in responding to others.
- Simon plays the 'supportive teacher' role, having most number of turns but using these as opportunities to elaborate and make supportive responses, agreeing, tracking and resolving.

- Celia plays a leadership role, initiating and developing but also checks that the group is with her and makes supportive responses. She is the most embedded in the group processes.
- Carole's role is highly marginal, she makes only one supportive contribution.

Table 5.5: summary of speech functions in sample 1 for Group K (Science)

Speech function	**Cynthia (Tutor)**	**Katrine**	**Richard**	**Sheila**	***Total***
No. of turns	13	8	1	4	***26***
No. of moves	34	17	1	7	***59***
No. of clauses	42	20	1	7	***70***
Type of Move					
Opening moves	4	2	0	0	***6***
Continuing moves	22	9	1	5	***37***
React: responding: supportive	6	2	0	1	***9***
React: responding: confronting	0	0	0	0	***0***
React: rejoinder: supportive	2	1	0	1	***4***
React: rejoinder: confronting	0	3	0	0	***3***

Analysis of Table 5.5

- Dominant and incidental participants: Cynthia the tutor dominates followed by Katrine and Sheila. Richard, and to some extent, Sheila play a subsidiary role.
- Number of turns: Cynthia has the most turns, 40% more than Katrine who is next in line. Richard has only 1 turn.
- Number of moves: Again Cynthia dominates having 50% more moves than Katrine. However she only just gets the most moves from her turns (2.6 on average against Katrine's 2.12).
- Number of clauses: Cynthia has over twice as many clauses as Katrine who is next in the list.
- Openings: Only Cynthia and Katrine make opening moves, and Cynthia makes twice as many. Both Katrine and Cynthia use a statement of fact and of opinion as opening moves. The use of statements as opening moves suggests authority and also severely constrains the response moves they allow other members - either agreement or counter challenge. They can thus be seen as quite a provocative

approach. However Cynthia also uses two open questions which are likely to elicit a wider range of responses from the group members.

- Continuing moves: All members make continuing moves but Cynthia dominates by making 59%. The range of continuing moves is wide for both Cynthia and Katrine. The largest proportion are prolonging enhancing moves which, along with other prolonging moves, suggests that Cynthia spends a lot of the time 'talking to herself' justifying, elaborating and enhancing her original point. This is a typically teacherly mode and appears to constrain other group members from participation. She uses the most monitoring moves to check her audience are still with her – again consistent with a teacherly discourse. However, the majority of her continuing moves are enhancements or extensions which can be seen to be strategies which broaden the discussion and provide opportunities for argument and debate - opportunities which are grasped by other members. Sheila's moves fall mainly into appending her comments onto others suggesting that she is dependent for her input on others initiation. Richard's one move is to prolong and elaborate someone else's contribution - a type of move which appears to be used by less confident participants.

- Responding reactions: All the responding moves are in the form of replies which close the discussion. This points to the rather short and sharp nature of the debate in this group. Again it is Cynthia who makes the most use of the responding moves, all replying moves - 5 agreements and 1 answer. These moves close the discussion and suggest that, from a position of authority, she is using this strategy to provide feedback to other group members for their contributions. The close ratio of responses to rejoinders (9:7) for this group suggests that these participants are fairly evenly split between keeping the discussion going and moving to a resolution.

- Rejoinder moves: Most of the rejoinder moves were supportive (4 out of 7). Everyone, except Richard makes a rejoinder move. The two made by Cynthia are both resolving moves which is consistent with her role as deciding when to close debate. Both Sheila and Katrine use tracking moves which are more tentative participative strategies. Katrine is the only participant to use confronting rejoinder moves - all three are re-challenges. This does display Katrine as both

an independent thinker and actively involved in the debate. Confronting rejoinder moves take the debate onward, opening up new avenues of discussion.

Summary : This group was the only one with a participating tutor, Cynthia.

- Cynthia dominated the proceedings, which turned into a 'two hander' between her and Katrine. Many of Cynthia's strategies are about giving information, and giving feedback to the others. She was firmly in the teacher role and much less of an equal seminar participant.
- Richard had a marginal role, relying on others' contributions to enable him to make one elaboration.
- Sheila took on a student role. She provided additional information as additions to others contributions. Her responses were to clarify or answer, she made no initiations of her own.
- Katrine's role was as challenger. She initiated and used a wide range of strategies to continue and thus hold on to talk time. Her use of rejoinder moves suggests that she is comfortable engaging in debate with her tutor, showing authority and taking risks.

Table 5.6: Summary of speech functions in sample 1 for Group L (Performing Arts)

Speech function	Sara	Laura	Danielle	Kathryn	Clive	Mark	*Tota*
No. of turns	2	10	9	4	4	6	*35*
No. of moves	2	16	12	4	10	17	*61*
No. of clauses	2	19	13	4	10	21	*69*
Type of Move							
Opening moves	0	1	1	0	2	2	*6*
Continuing moves	0	10	4	0	3	13	*30*
React: responding: supportive	2	3	6	3	3	1	*18*
React: responding: confronting	0	0	0	0	0	0	*0*
React: rejoinder: supportive	0	0	0	1	2	0	*3*
React: rejoinder: confronting	0	2	1	0	0	1	*4*

Analysis of Table 5.6

- Dominant and incidental participants: This group is more evenly matched. The dominant participants are Laura and Mark, but everyone makes some contribution.
- Number of turns: Laura has the most turns, but again there is less difference between all the members than in the other groups, the range being between 2 -10 turns.
- Number of moves: Mark makes the most moves, closely followed by Laura. Mark just gets the most moves from his turns (an average of 2.8 against Clive's 2.5 moves per turn), but the difference is so slight that this group doesn't appear to have a *speech functionally dominant* member.
- Number of clauses: Mark has the most (21) closely followed by Laura (19) and Mark just gets more clauses per moves and therefore has more airspace.
- Openings: Laura, Danielle, Clive and Mark make opening moves, with Clive and Mark making the most. Half of all the opening moves were framed as statements and made by Laura, Clive and Mark. Mark also made a command. This suggests an egocentricism and also a more provocative style - eliciting responses by making statements. Danielle is the only participant to use an open question, suggesting she is encouraging more open-ended responses from her peers.
- Continuing moves: Mark makes the most followed closely by Laura. Most of Mark's moves are elaborating (6 out of 13) which suggests he holds onto airtime by re-stating what has already been said. He also makes use of extending and enhancing moves, which prolong debate by providing contrasting information. This combined with his use of commands and statements as openers suggests Mark uses his role to provoke others. Laura's makes the most monitoring moves (3) and her prolonging moves are very evenly spaced which suggests she uses her role to pull the group together. Danielle and Clive's moves are similar, both monitor and appear to occupy a more peripheral supporting role to the main players of Laura and Mark.
- Responding reactions: Laura and Mark are the only participants to use developing moves, extending others' comments. All participants make agreeing moves and most make answering or affirming moves. All participants in this group are working hard at group cohesion, using responding supportive language strategies

to demonstrate a group identity. Danielle makes the most responding supportive moves.

- Rejoinder moves: All members except Sara make rejoinder moves adding to the open-endedness of talk. Types of moves are fairly evenly balanced between supportive and confronting. Clive makes the most supporting moves, probing or resolving. This combined with his other move patterns suggests he displays some tension between his use of opening moves, which are quite provocative, and his follow-on submissive strategies, suggesting some ambiguity in his role. Kathryn makes a resolving move which, in line with her other move patterns, shows her, like Sara, to be playing a role of group support, aiding the work of group cohesion. Laura, Danielle and Mark all make confronting rejoinder moves, however Laura and Mark's moves, rebounding and re-challenging shows them to have independence and not to fear initiating further debate. Whereas for Danielle, her rejoinder move is a refutation which, together with her other move patterns, shows her dependence on other participants.

Summary: This group was the most evenly matched in terms of contribution to debate. Roles can be summarised as follows:

- Mark took on the role of initiator, and held airspace through his use of elaborating moves. He offered less in response to others' contributions and didn't get very involved in discussion.
- Laura's position was much more evenly played. She initiated and held talk time through extensive elaborating moves but through her reacting moves was fully involved in the debate. Her rejoinder moves show some independence and willingness to keep the debate going.
- There is ambiguity in Clive's role, his strong opening moves not backed up by responses (he is older and not a permanent member of this group). This suggests he was careful of his peripheral group role
- Sara and Kathryn are part of the supporting chorus of the group, wholly dependent on others for their contributions.
- Danielle is also dependent on others for many of her contributions but she does initiate talk. Her heavy use of agreeing and affirming responses suggests that she is heavily engaged in strategies which help to maintain group cohesion.

Of all the seminar groups, this group was the most evenly balanced in terms of individual participation. They also produced the biggest difference between responding and rejoinder moves (18 against 7 rejoinder moves). The heavy weighting towards supporting responding moves suggests that they are working hard at a display of group cohesion and agreement. This strategy is tending to close down debate, perhaps closing off avenues of potential disagreement. Rejoinder moves which keep debate open also make it more risky and the low levels of such moves suggests that this group doesn't want to risk going into more dangerous territory. The bulk of moves are continuing, suggesting that discussion is kept going through building on existing moves - another risk-avoidance strategy.

Table 5.7: Summary of speech functions in sample 1 for Group J (Tourism)

Speech function	**Alice**	**Alex**	**Lynne**	**Paul**	***Total***
No. of turns	7	7	1	1	***16***
No. of moves	17	14	10	4	***45***
No. of clauses	23	23	15	5	***66***
Type of Move					
Opening moves	1	3	0	0	***4***
Continuing moves	13	6	9	2	***30***
React: responding: supportive	1	4	0	2	***7***
React: responding: confronting	0	0	0	0	***0***
React: rejoinder: supportive	1	1	0	0	***2***
React: rejoinder: confronting	1	0	1	0	***2***

Analysis of Table 5.7:

- Dominant and incidental participants: Alice and Alex are the dominant members with Lynne and Paul playing subsidiary roles.
- Number of turns: Alex and Alice share the most number of turns. This suggests that these two are competing for turns, with Lynne and Paul on-looking.
- Number of moves: Alice just has the most moves and gets more moves from her turns (average of 2.4 moves per turn against Alex's 2) and of these two dominant members, Alice can be said to be *speech functionally dominant.* The two marginalised members manage to pack in more moves to their turns but their contribution is small with only1 turn each.

- Number of clauses: Alice and Alex are evenly matched, Alex however just produces more clauses per move and therefore gets more value from his role as a speaker.
- Openings: Only Alex and Alice make opening moves. Alex has more than twice as many openings as Alice. Although Alice is speech functionally dominant her moves/turns tend to be somewhat more reactive and dependent on the moves of others. The types of openings made by Alex are more assertive and closed with commands, statements of fact and closed questions, whereas Alice uses a statement of opinion. It could be that Alice's age and experience help her to risk presenting her opinions for debate whereas Alex is less sure of himself, and less able to risk 'opening up'.
- Continuing moves: Alice is the only group member to use a monitoring move, checking others are still with her. Alex uses more elaborations, whereas Alice continues most and uses more extensions.
- Responding reactions: Of reacting moves, 7 are responses and 4 rejoinders. This suggests that these participants wish to move the discussion to a resolution. All the responding moves are supportive which serves to close the exchange, avoiding conflict or the negotiation of difference. Paul only uses responding reactions whereas Alice, Alex and Lynne use some rejoinder reactions. Alex's dominant pattern of openings fizzles out into a submissive response pattern with all his responses being agreements. Paul's responses too are submissive and reactive. Lynne has the least responses suggesting that she may be less aware of or skilled in interacting with the others.
- Rejoinder moves: There are only 4 rejoinder moves and Lynne makes the only re-challenge. Her strategy is the most argumentative. This suggests that although she may not feel confident to open moves, her contribution is significant in moving the discussion onwards, adopting strategies which continue and prolong the dialogue.

Summary:

- Alex takes on quite a teacherly role, issuing commands and statements of fact to the others and holds on to talk space by elaborating his statements. However, his responding role is marginal and submissive.

- Alice's high use of continuing moves and low use of reacting developing moves suggest that she is less integrated into the group, contributing through 'talking to herself' rather than supporting others.
- Lynne plays an important role in continuing the dialogue, but makes little contribution to responding. She appears to be less involved in maintaining the social aspect of the group.
- Paul seems most comfortable in responding in a 'typical' pupil role, and eagerly leaps into the 'pupil' space opened up by Alex's 'teacher', complying and answering his question.

Most of the seminars have individuals who take on a teacherly role (Stephanie, Simon, Maggie and Alex, as well as Cynthia who is a tutor), which positions others in the role of pupil rather than equal. This demonstrates some of the power and status associated with particular roles reviewed in Chapter 2. It suggests an uncertainty about role possibilities for novice participants who fall back on 'known' examples. Although the seminar might seem superficially to be an opportunity for the participation of equals, this is not the case since participant roles and status are encoded within this form of academic discourse.

MAPPING SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Coding and analysis of the broader corpus of data added the following further perspectives.

The impact of friendship groups:

The two groups with the strongest friendship networks were performing arts and cultural studies. As Buckingham found in exploring children's talk about television, existing social relationships between group members are a major determinant of the meanings generated within group discussion (Buckingham 1991:233). The performing arts group (except Clive who had only joined in for the seminar) had just finished their end of year production when they carried out their seminar. The production is a big moment in the students' career, a point mentioned in the group

debrief and tutor interview, which had obviously had a significant bonding impact on them. Whereas in most of the seminars students came into the room singly or in small groups, the performing arts students burst through the door in a mass, talking and laughing. All members were young and close in age (a mean age of 22 years), and the group dynamics were relaxed and open, with participants being very supportive of each other. Each presenter was collectively clapped and thanked when they finished their presentation. The analysis of moves in Table 5.6 backs up this impression with this group having the most equitable share of input into the discussion. However, their closeness may be somewhat illusory as their seminar interaction did not involve them in much debate which would prolong the discussion. Their interaction tended to take the form of a main player stating their personal views which generated a supporting ripple chorus - often comprising four or more other students - of supportive murmuring. The group seemed intent on nurturing their new found togetherness, providing supportive responses and agreeing with each other - an example of the cumulative talk patterns noted by Fisher (Fisher 1994) – rather than developing scaffolding or challenging opinions.

The cultural studies group were also a close friendship group who had been together in all modules throughout their three years - as Stephanie says "we're friends, it made it easier" (Student 4 interview). Group members were older than in performing arts (mean age of 31 years) and seemed more confidently at ease with each other. They were more inclined to issue challenges, teasing and testing ideas, keeping the debate going. Their interaction and its pacing was more akin to a tennis match with the ball being kept in play with fast volleys interposed with slower base line shots. The result was that their interaction, although friendly, was more combative. A point noted by Stephanie, "it can get vibrant, angry even" (student 4 interview).

From these examples, it is clear that out of class events and friendship groupings are likely to have an impact on seminar discourse and that maintaining peer relationships appears to be of particular importance where strong friendships are in place. There were some contradictory views expressed by students about whether they felt more comfortable presenting seminars to friends or strangers. Some students felt that leading a seminar with people you know is more difficult because "*you value the opinion of people you know*" (Sheila, science group debrief) endorsed by Danielle,

"If you don't know people you don't care if you upset them because you are probably not going to see them again" (performing arts group debrief). These two views exemplify the different focus in the science and performing arts groups – for science the emphasis is on valuing the opinion of peers whereas for performing arts the aim is not to upset people. Another example of the impact of emic clashes coming from different subject cultures.

Other manifestations of group support:

Generally the seminar exchanges were collaborative events with collaboration marked by particular discourse strategies. There are examples where the use of particular words or phrases are introduced by one member into the seminar and are then subsequently taken up by others. For example in Media Studies Group D, Simon raises an idea (fashionable) which is taken up by Celia (trendy).

Simon the vast majority of them were so it was like a fashion thing, wasn't it, it was fashionable to um (.) show these working class people
Celia Yeah, its interesting isn't it, I just think ground down working class was trendy
Group D Media Studies

Sometimes, the subtle change of terminology by participants further along the segment suggests linguistic, and maybe social, dominance of particular seminar members in the shaping of discourse. In the media seminar, Simon was a dominant group member and exercised dominance over discussions. In the following example, Hilary starts by using 'bloke' but then takes on Simon's alternative choice of terminology 'guy':

Hilary is that the bloke who directed something
Simon which guy
Hilary the guy whose quote you gave ( )
Group D Media Studies

A more collaborative approach to the development of an idea is contained in the following example from tourism. In this example I have added a transcription column identifying the function of the utterance in developing ideas in this segment.

		Function
Sharon	{they are also changing it aren't they from having the normal , I mean our interpretations of museums are normally Victorian buildings with glass cases and	**suggesting an idea**
Polly	'Look, don't touch' isn't it - yeah	**extending the idea**
Sharon	yeah and {now	**accepts - extends**
Alan	{more interactive	**extends**
Sharon	and they are coming on, having to be more interactive	**extends**

Group I Tourism

Sharon's idea of changes in museum organisation is supported first by Polly in helping to define the Victorian type of museum and then by Alan in bringing in the word interactive which Sharon takes on and reinforces

Managing disagreement:

Where there is disagreement, it tends to be covert rather than the more overt strategies used in disputational talk by younger pupils (Fisher 1994). In the following extract, Tracey's offer of support "yeah" plus a suggestion that she explains why "because" is initially taken up by Angela who explains why but then Tracey's attempt to collaboratively construct this idea is not taken on board. Alice sticks to her use of the looser term "difficult" rather than Tracey's suggested "hardship".

		Function
Alice	well I think it could be said that we are fostering a false picture because people look back with a rosy glow you know and talk about the good old days when in fact things were not good. Those of you that have seen that series on the TV the 1900's house, the poor people realise what a horrible time they had and when you go to these heritage centres you are presented with a rather more enjoyable picture of life in the olden days than actual takes place.	**an idea** **an example to extend idea**
Tracey	yeah {because?	**accepts - suggests**
Alice	{you can't quite get the feeling how difficult	**extends**

	it was for the miners to go to the mine {or		
Tracey		{the hardships	**suggestion**
Alice	the tin, the tin workers in the mines in Cornwall,		**extends**
	its very difficult		**suggestion ignored**

Group I Tourism

There were different styles of interaction in the different subject groups. In the Cultural Studies group, there was much overlapping of turns such as found by Coates in her research on female friendship groups as an example of a positive politeness ethos indicative of a close and intimate friendship (1994:190). The group had no particular leader (although teacherly roles were appropriated at times). In the tourism group, the style of interaction was more ordered with formal turn taking, longer turns, and prior selection of a chairperson. Although the tourism group had the biggest age difference between participants (41 years between youngest and oldest) this was not particularly different from the Cultural Studies group (30 years difference). Although age difference per se may not be a significant issue, the role appropriated by individual players is significant. In the Tourism group, the older members took on an overtly 'parental' role with the younger members drawing on outside pre-existing roles; whereas differences in the Cultural Studies group were more related to pre-existing friendship roles.

MOTIVATION AND IDENTITY MARKERS

Subjectivity, identity and the seminar

In discussing written academic discourse, Ivanic argues that student members of an academic community are largely receivers of knowledge rather than contributors (1998:145). However, in a seminar group, the emphasis is on participants' contributing aspects of individual research into the seminar community and managing the discussion. At the same time, an academic community is not hermetically sealed, and members will bring to the seminar space their own conceptions of self. Ivanic identifies aspects of identity which students bring to the academic world and aspects of identity related to their new role within the academic community or within their field of subject study. She argues that learners' identities are in a state of flux,

sometimes new identities will be accommodated and at others they will be resisted (Ivanic 1998:237-244). I have broadened Ivanic's categories to suggest that in seminars identity positions could include:

- Personal identity – projection of preferred definitions of self, eg as humorous, serious, attractive, teasing and so on
- Carry-over identity – from previous roles (work, parenthood);
- Locational identity – with a particular place or geographic location
- Social identity – by gender, ethnicity, class, nationality
- Academic role identity – as a student or a teacher
- Field of study identity - as a student of a particular academic subject;
- Course identity - as a student on a particular type of course – eg an HND or Degree student which also includes status hierarchies;
- Destination identity – as a potential professional practitioner after completing studentship

Such multiple identities will impact on the voices used by individuals within the seminar space, maybe resulting in tensions between discourse hierarchies.

Both the seminar transcriptions and the interviews with participants highlight the seminar as a space in which participants' multiple identities become *foregrounded*[2]. Status as a student is a transitional state and can be seen to be an apprenticeship for the future. Student use of academic discourse can be seen as a marker of students' identity progress along a continuum which takes them from entry, where they will use little academic discourse, to exit where they may demonstrate fluency. An alternative view is to see the use of academic discourse as evidence of positioning as social subjects within an academic setting, a positioning to be resisted or accepted. There is thus likely to be differences both between students and within individual students in the extent to which they accommodate or resist these identities.

In each of the seminar groups, there tended to be one or more students who took on a teacherly role. This was particularly marked in Tracey's role in the tourism group

[2] as used by the Russian formalists, see Hawkes (1977) *Structuralism and Semiotics*. London: Methuen

where her interjections were very teacherly - she would sum up, clarify, bring in quieter group members, ask questions, for example:

> Tracey I think Katie has something else to say on museums
>
> *Group I Tourism*

These actions took the group discussion forward. They also used a recognisable form of classroom discourse – the question and reply which suggests that these students are comfortable in this type of discourse. It also suggests that there is firm teacher control over the seminar space even though the teacher is not part of the debate. Tracey, Alice and Susan were all conscious of Vera, the tutor's, presence and that they had specific tasks to fulfil:

> Tracey "Vera gave us a list of key words that we could use either within the seminar paper or in the seminar and it was just trying to bring those key words in at the appropriate time without them sounding so out of context"
>
> *Student Interview 2*

Here the participants' role is to act out the scenario which has been established by the tutor. This is likely to be an implicit element of any seminar, as a tutor would have written the brief and have devised the assessment criteria. However in this case, the tutor has also provided the script and the students' role in enacting the script. Tutor control is not entirely benign, Tracey is well aware that mentioning the key words in the seminar is essential:

> Tracey It goes towards the grade doesn't it? If you speak the tourism language that goes towards the grading criteria
>
> *Student Interview 2*

Students seem to take an explicitly pragmatic approach to the seminar, bringing in particular words, using particular quotes, giving a clear signal that they are 'in role'.

However, where taking on a teacher role is more overt, as in literally 'changing places' with students coming to the front of the class, or standing to present their

seminars, there was much more reluctance to make this leap, an issue noted by tutors and students:

> "they have to sit in my chair and present and they sit there for a minute and it's like the whole room has changed for them, I suppose it's a perspective they are not used to and they are outside the group as well, and everyone is looking at them and they just hate it. And often they say 'do I have to sit at the front can't I just do it from here?' as if that is some security for them to be not the focus of attention. Not away from their peers."
>
> *Interview with Chris, Performing Arts Tutor*

> "I don't like standing up, I don't think anyone does"
>
> *Karen , Science group debrief*

While seminars provide a safe haven to practice the discursive strategies associated with being a member of the academic community, students cling on to their novice status, unready to make the full transition to academy member.

What of the quiet student?

Active participation by individuals varies considerably. Although the sample is small, there is some evidence to suggest that groups which have members who are closer in age seem to have more equitable participation. There seems a possibility that the articulate, older members - male or female - of groups can dominate the discussion. It was clear in the group debriefs that there were different perceptions of how easy it was to participate in the seminar with older students feeling that participation was easier than the younger members. When asked if having a chairperson helped to bring in quieter members, Alice, one of the dominant members in Tourism Group J said *"I don't think it matters, because people give their opinion and then we all talk about it don't we?"* But Holly, one of the quiet younger students, said *"I just feel very awkward, speaking ... I just feel overawed by it all"*. One of the other silent seminar participants justified her position:

> Lesley Well it depends if I am interested in something – then I'll speak, if I'm not then I won't say anything. But I was listening to everybody else, getting info.

Tourism group J: Group debrief

Rather than silence being a marker of disengagement or nervousness, Lesley's response suggests that silence can be an active decision not to participate. Quietness was largely accepted by the student participants, as this exchange from performing arts suggests:

> Stella "there are always going to be people who feel more open to speak more than others
> Sara some just like to sit and watch just to take in what is going on, because you do that don't you sometimes?
> Lianne I think everyone contributed even if they sat and listened they were taking it in not necessarily putting their opinions
> Sara sometimes when you are on the same wavelength as other people they say it before you and you don't need to
>
> *Performing Arts: Group debrief*

Tutors were less accepting of student silence. Part of this could be linked to tutor perception of the learning process and the role of seminars. Matthew was a strong believer in the apprenticeship model whereby tutors modelled behaviours which students could emulate:

> "There is an absolute sense of what is going on in seminars is that they are learning to copy us. There is a whole other side as well of obstruction, refusal, non-participation, it not being cool to speak. These are part of the prohibitions that I didn't give detail of before. There is, particularly with young men I think, a prohibition on speaking. It is actually not cool to participate, its cool just to sit there with your legs apart, chewing gum, fingering your mobile phone and looking bored."
>
> *Staff Interview2, Matthew Media Studies*

There were few examples of such disengagement. Where it occurred it was signalled by paralinguistic means for example, closed body language, no eye contact and in one case active engagement in other activities. Student silence in this context can be interpreted as a confrontational strategy and a challenge to tutor authority - a long way from Grant's 'docile bodies' (Grant1997:10). This type of student behaviour can be seen as akin to the sub-rosa discourse found by Sola and Bennett through which students become empowered to resist official discourse in the classroom (Sola and

Bennett 1994). This reinforces the concept of the seminar as a hegemonic site where struggle linked to differences of status and power is manifested (Gramsci 1971).

Markers of 'identity in transition'

There was evidence that participants were exhibiting carry over identities in their seminar interactions, drawing on the attitudes and actions used in similar outside identities, e.g. as mothers. Both Alice and Susan exhibited this role behaviour in their interactions with a younger, shy, male member of the group. *"we wanted to bring him out really"* (interview with Susan). But their way of 'bringing him out' was not a teacherly one, since they elected to speak for him, *"we kept saying 'now Michael don't worry about the seminar we'll help you, you tell us what you want us to talk about and we'll talk about it'*. However, there is here a recognition that not all learners would be able to participate with the same ease. It is unlikely that they would have offered similar help with a written piece of work and therefore they were marking oral participation as having particular difficulties for shy, less experienced people.

In the early phase of research students were invited to individual interviews. In the event only mature students came forward. This suggests that these students may be more comfortable in taking on identities as co-researchers and that younger students were more resistant to this identity change, not seeing themselves as part of the academic community.

The importance of gender as a marker of social identity was highlighted in the seminars, particularly where the discussion ranged over related areas. Discussions of gender roles and sexuality often provoked personal responses, characterised by use of personal pronouns and some 'slipping out of role' for the seminar participants. This could get quite heated as in the two examples discussed under transgressive moments on page 95.

I would argue that using academic discourse at all is part of practising a new identity as a student. Indeed one could see being in the seminar as part of this identity. This

was recognised by Lilly who saw seminars as a right of passage in university life, *"if you get used to doing it its alright because you can't go to Uni (sic) and not do a seminar really*" (Tourism Group J group debrief).

Most of the participants understood the role of seminar participation as preparation for life after college. In interview Stephanie had concerns that their seminar was *"a bit over-familiar, not really very professional*" (Student 4 interview, Cultural Studies). When asked for her definition of 'professional' she added *"it should have been neat and tidy, it didn't feel quite correct, we are third year students and we should be discussing intellectually and seriously".*

In interviews and student debriefs, the importance of identification with the subject being studied was evident for all the student groups, particularly for performing arts students. However, there was little evidence for this in the seminar presentations. Performing arts students were in general keen to emphasise the difference of performing arts as a subject and of themselves as a student group. They took this 'celebration of difference' into their perception of the value of the active engagement and participatory nature of seminars:

> "why seminars help PA students more is because we are interested in a visual subject or sound or whatever. If we were studying something else maybe lectures would help more but we are better sat acting or singing or something more visual to talk about; and expressing it like this I think helps us more."
> *(Stella, performing arts group debrief).*

Their tutor, Chris, who also taught literary studies noted that literary studies students didn't like presenting their work, and didn't have much commitment to group processes. *"it's a real problem because seminars depend on group participation and often they (literary studies students) will turn up for their own and not turn up to listen to other people."*

There were often elements of suspicion between groups of students studying different subject areas that had a negative effect when groups are brought together for seminar

work. Chris again on his experience of jointly teaching literary studies and performing arts students:

> "each group felt incredibly intimidated by the other group. Literary studies were all brainy because they had done lots of critical theory and so they had an advantage and had read lots of books, so performing arts felt intimidated. But literary studies felt intimidated because it was a performing arts module and they were performing arts students who were confident and cocky and able to do it."
>
> *Staff Interview 3*

There was only one group of students, tourism, which came from mixed course backgrounds where some students were on a three-year degree programme and others had joined the final year from an HND course. In the group debrief, the HND students felt disadvantaged because they hadn't been practising seminars for as long as the degree students and felt that *"everyone seems to know a lot more"* (Holly, Tourism group J debrief). The group were very supportive of this perspective and Holly went on to add :

> "I reckon I'm a bit of a slow learner, it takes me time to get to grips with new things"
>
> *Holly (tourism group debrief)*

This interchange suggests that Holly and others are carrying forward their left over identity with the HND - which perhaps they felt catered more for their perception of themselves. This vestigial identity appeared to be having a psychologically constraining effect on Holly's engagement with her studies. She felt she wasn't as competent as her peers, because she had come from the HND.

SUMMARY

In this chapter a functional-semantic approach, following Halliday (1984; 1994b) was used to explore the structural elements of spoken academic discourse to analyse the ways in which participants make interpersonal meanings in their seminar interactions. These techniques have enabled a more detailed exploration to be made of how individuals, through their discourse strategies, identify, negotiate, manage and maintain their roles and relationships.

Findings suggest that whatever the pedagogic aim of the seminar, participants will be deploying their own resources to achieve social effects. Other contextual factors impinged on the impact of these interpersonal meaning making practices. In some cases, the opportunity presented by the seminar for bonding, and developing a group, and to some extent, field of study, identity, will outweigh other types of learning. This was so for the performing arts group and could be linked to the importance attached to teamwork in this field of study. In other cases, for example, cultural studies, strong, pre-existing friendship networks provided a robust context in which challenge and debate could flourish promoting a range of learning outcomes. The life experiences and social backgrounds which individuals bring to the seminar event have a significant effect on seminar interaction. The inference here is that seminar practices are informed by personal, cultural and social drivers, which may be as, or more, compelling to participants than accomplishing pedagogic aims.

The different physical space and social relationships existing in performing arts provided a setting in which a different form of seminar text was generated. The performing arts example can be seen to be a case of low institutional control where students had more autonomy, more ownership of the physical space, a close and relaxed relationship with tutors. The controlling forces at work were more linked to performing arts as a profession and the importance assigned to feelings, group identity and interpersonal relationships. In their drive to achieve social effects in their seminar interactions, this group of students was reproducing ideologies of the profession to which they aspire.

The seminar also provides a context in which individual engagement with past, present and future identities comes to the fore and are manifested through their lexico-semantic choices. Part of the student journey is practising the language of the academy in its written and oral form. In these interactions students do not take on a fixed subject position, rather there is evidence student identities are in transition struggling with the "multiple possibilities for self-hood" available to them. (Ivanic 1997:281-323).

CHAPTER 6: THE SEMINAR AS TEXT

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMINGS

The meaning making practices of seminars will be affected by the institutions in which they take place. Institutions have their own discourses which place expectations and constraints on behaviours - both for staff and students. Framings here refers to "how meanings are to be put together, the forms by which they are to be made public, and the nature of the social relationships that go with it" (Bernstein 1996:27). The connotative semiosis of the physical space in which learning takes place which will impact on participants as part of an institutions meaning making practices.

All these seminars took place in the same institution. The physical classroom space for all but performing arts is on the main campus in a 1960's built tower block. Although clean and free from graffiti, the campus is dull, 'municipal', and there is little public celebration or display of student work. Classrooms are in multiple use, impersonal, un-carpeted and with standard plastic chairs and tables. Both staff and students have 'ownership' of the course noticeboards. The campus is shared between further and higher education students. Students tend to live at home or rent rooms in private houses, there is no college-owned student accommodation. There is little collective social space, and no designated space for higher education students on campus, although there is an active student union and an on-site bar. This type of institutional setting retains the connotations of school and other formal institutions. It is not very comfortable or welcoming.

The performing arts students are based in a separate building, previously a Victorian primary school, which is only used for performing arts. They have a common room and flexible use of rehearsal and performance spaces. The classroom used for their seminar is carpeted. This setting provided a very different context from those students on the main campus.

Set against this, at times austere, background, the personal relationships between staff and student are informal and very supportive:

> Stella Its like the tutors are equal to us and we can feel comfortable with them and express our opinions.
> *Performing Arts Group debrief*

The College has a generous personal tutorial system and students benefit from a clear, stated, entitlement to individual support. The level of personal tutorial involvement is probably more than the norm in higher education institutions in the UK. Some of these students had studied at the college for A level, National Diploma or Access courses before joining the higher education programme. First names are used and staff clearly knew each student as an individual. Staff have a personal commitment to access and progression. During the seminars, students were welcomed and thanked for their contributions. They were provided with guidance, oral and written, before the seminar, and there were some opportunities for individual feedback. Students (and staff) arrived on time and behaviours in classroom and communal areas were courteous, respectful and supportive.

The difference between the austere physical space of the main college and the warm relationships between staff and students suggests ambiguity in the way that students are valued. Students may experience alienation through the connotations the physical space has of school, which for many will not have been a positive experience. The paucity of obvious investment in student comfort may reinforce lack of self-esteem. The position was very different for performing arts students who tended to regard, and treat, 'their' building as a second home, perhaps reinforcing the somewhat 'cosy' personal and social dynamics of this group.

<u>Setting the seminar scene: course handouts</u>

Course handbooks carried a brief standard definition of seminars as a 'small group discussion'. More detailed guidance was provided in module handouts but this concentrated on operational issues such as timings and topics with some guidance on links to module outcomes. However, in each case these were couched in vague terms

and there was no mapping to assessment frameworks nor any statement of the specific aims, tasks, learning outcomes or assessment criteria of the seminars. The absence of precise specifications led to confusion. In discussing the tourism seminar, Tracey's view was that it was 'informal' because although the topic under discussion and student participation was felt to be formal requirements, the lack of a set structure for the event was seen as informal. This contradiction – in Tracey's eyes – led to some uncertainty about how to handle the event.

Openings and closings: phatic communication at work

Phatic communication, is defined by Malinowski as the inconsequential chit-chat and formulaic ways of approach which helps to bind groups together (Malinowski 1994). Where phatic communication is present there is likely to be more social cohesion between group members and there were significant differences in the extent to which phatic communication was at work in the different groups. For example, the performing arts group entered the seminar room as a noisy, animated group. Although less boisterous, cultural studies students also arrived in a group and in these two cases, the use of phatic communication was strong, carrying on while individuals unpacked bags, were seated and got ready to start. In media studies and, to some extent in tourism, students tended to arrive in pairs or singly, and although there were some greetings, not all group members were involved. With the science students a more reverential air pervaded the seminar room - all arrived alone and initial greetings were hushed.

Closings were similarly differentiated with performing arts students clapping each 'performer' at the end of their turn and leaving the room in a noisy huddle. In the science group one member left early, after her presentation was completed. Although this had been agreed in advance with the tutor it disrupted the flow of discussion.

The influence of the tutor in setting the scene seemed peripheral. In each case the tutor was already in the seminar room but did not address students either individually or as a group until they were all seated. It appears that group cohesion exists separately from tutor involvement.

These findings support other analysis of the different levels of social cohesion in the seminar groups, with the performing arts and cultural studies group being the most cohesive.

'Chorusing' as a form of phatic communication

Although there was evidence in most of the seminar groups of the collaborative construction of meaning the performing arts group used a distinctive form of discursive strategy to collaborate and support each other as in this example:

Mark	I think the thing this scene highlights most is the stereotype
Liz	yeah
Stella	yeah
Liz	umm
Mark	it doesn't, at the time, because when did you say it was written?
Ruby	70's
Liz	70's
Mark	it plays to a stereotype and I think unfortunately what it does, it plays to a stereotype to get a laugh
Dawn	umm
Ruby	umm
Liz	definitely

Performing arts group M

Liz, Stella, Ruby and Dawn play the chorus to Mark's lead. The supporting sounds follow each other in a very fast sequence producing an aural 'ripple' effect, as in a stone plopped in water. This phenomenon was very frequent and pervaded the seminar. While as a linguistic strategy it can be seen to allow less confident group members such as Liz to add progressively more certain contributions, its main function is to demonstrate group solidarity and support the main speaker. An oral form of clapping. As such I would argue it constitutes a form of phatic communication

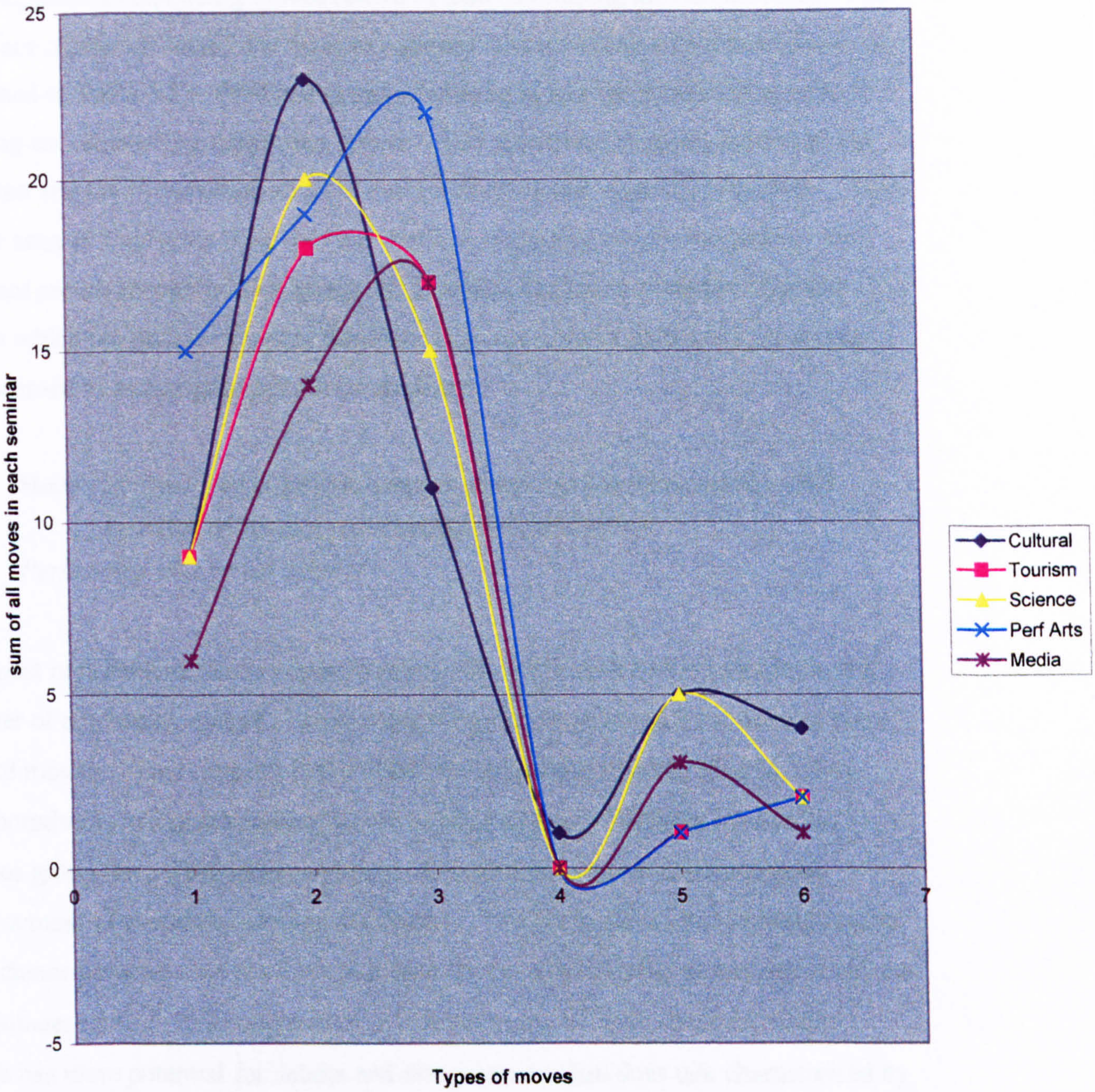
FORMAL OR INFORMAL GENRE

In Chapter 5 I mapped the interactions between seminar participants using data generated from a speech function and sequencing analysis of samples outlined in Tables 5.3 – 5.7. This enabled analysis of individual seminar participants' roles within the seminar group, the dynamics of the social interactions, power, status, friendships and so on and how far this impacts on talk. However, this data also enabled an analysis to be made of the pattern and frequency of different types of moves within sequences of seminar talk. I now take this analysis further by focusing on exploring the *differences between seminars*; and of the *difference between seminars and other talk varieties*, how far seminar talk is similar to or different from other types of talk in different settings. This enables further exploration of whether seminar talk is more closely allied with informal or formal talk patterns.

Differences between seminars:

To explore these differences, the summary moves data described in Tables 5.3 – 5.7 was plotted into a graph (Graph 6.1). This graph shows different 'shapes' for the five subject seminar sequences.

Graph 6.1: summary of moves functions for seminar samples



1= opening moves
2= continuing moves
3= responding supportive moves
4= responding confronting moves
5 = rejoinder supporting moves
6 = rejoinder confronting moves

The 'x' axis of the graph shows a sequence of moves from opening (move 1) through continuing (move 2) and on to the four types of response moves (moves 3,4,5,6). The graph shows that in general each of the seminars had a similar patterning of moves, although Media studies and performing arts were the only two groups to have more supportive responding moves (move 3) than developing moves (move 2). The incidence of moves 1 and 2 for these two groups is more allied with informal talk as described in Table 6.2 . Performing arts is striking in its high incidence of both opening and responding supportive moves. This group was working hard at group cohesion and their interaction was focused on opening and agreeing responses. This can be seen as displaying their 'novice' status in managing group discussion – they were not secure enough in their group relationships to chance using the rejoinder moves which would have sparked the discussion into a more argumentative frame. This seemed to be recognised by these students:

> Shelly you don't want to upset the group. I am sure someone today could have said something really controversial but they thought better of it
>
> *Performing arts group debrief*

The most noticeable difference is between media studies and cultural studies in the number of continuing moves[1], where cultural studies has about a third more of these type of moves. This suggests that cultural students were building themes, often collaboratively, using developing moves to extend ideas. Whereas the Media Studies group were more intent on using supportive responses which constrain development of themes by closing discussion. The graph shows that cultural studies and science patterns were the most similar with more developing moves and more use of rejoinder moves. Rejoinder moves are more typical of open, fluid discussion which has more potential for debate and disagreement than does talk characterised by the use of responding moves, which are more inclined to support closing off of the discussion. Eggins & Slade (1997) argue that open discussion is a characteristic of informal talk where participants have a vested interest in keeping the conversation going in order to continue negotiation of interpersonal roles and relationships. More closed types of discussion are a feature of pragmatic exchanges, such as exchanging

[1] see Table 5.2 for an explanation of different move types.

commodities, and of formal talk, such as meetings. Although science students used rejoinder moves these were predominantly supporting moves - an indicator of uncertainty about interpersonal roles and relationships and the consequent importance attached to the overt avoidance of conflict. Cultural studies students had rejoinder moves spread between supportive and confronting. The debate in this group was characterised by a more combative style which fore-grounded negotiation of personal roles by keeping the exchange going, displaying a confidence in the strength of the underlying relationships. This type of exchange perhaps also displays a more competitive edge amongst group members.

What then are the implications for analysing seminar talk? Both cultural studies and performing arts groups comprised strong friendship groups and yet their moves structure are different. It may be that out of class friendships as such have less impact on seminar interaction than does the maturity of such friendships. Secure group friendships, such as that enjoyed by cultural studies, seem to support confidence in practising argumentative strategies. The science group was different as the tutor played an active role. The tutor seems to have provided a focus issuing challenges and being challenged, thus supporting the more argumentative move patterning in this group.

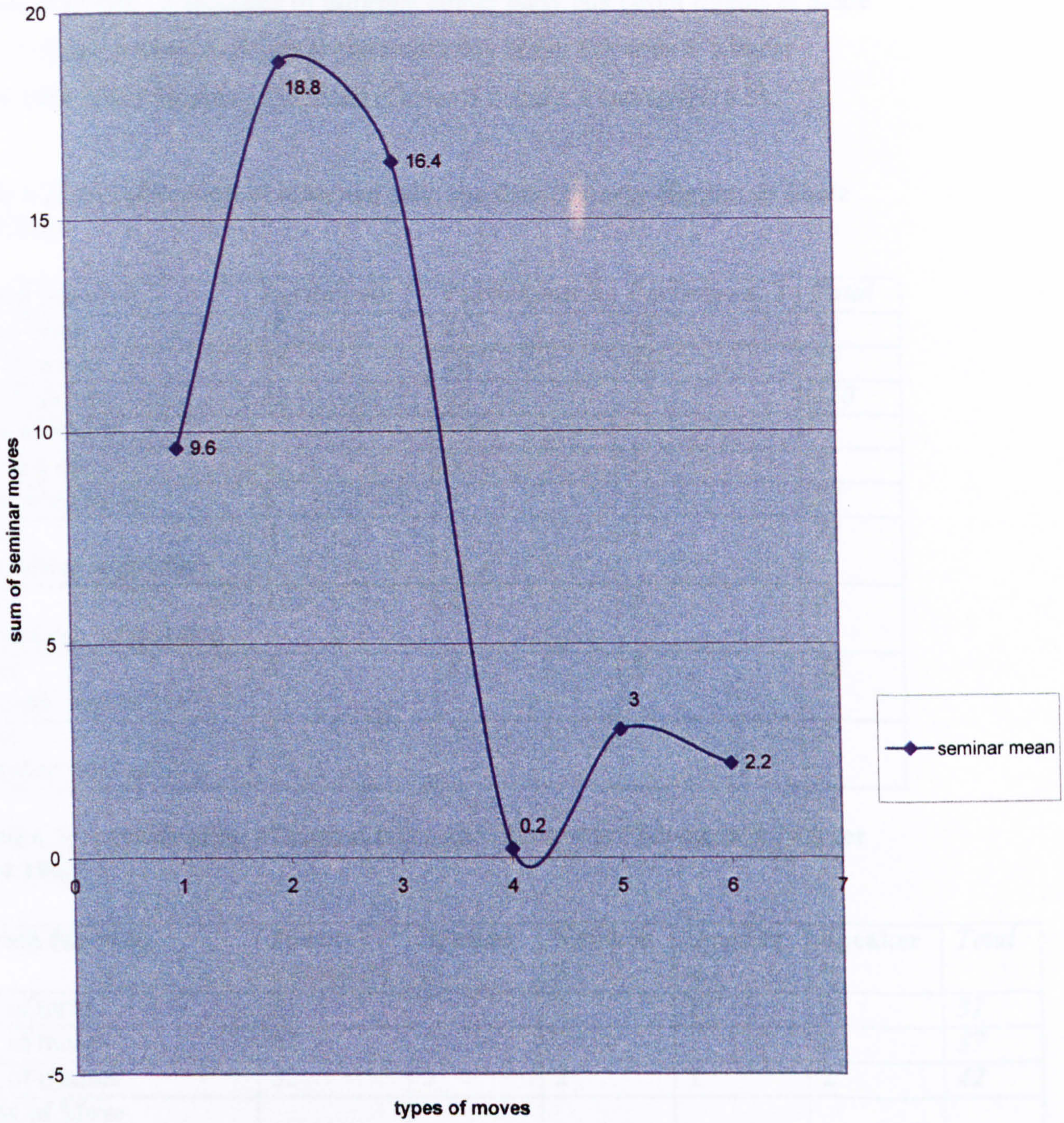
Seminars and other talk varieties:

In order to compare seminar talk to other talk varieties, further data manipulation was required. I aggregated the data from the extracts of each subject seminar (Tables 5.3 - 5.7) to provide a model of an 'average' or typical seminar sequence coded for moves function (Table 6.1 and Graph 6.2).

Table 6.1: A typification of seminar talk

Speech function	***Mean total***
No. of turns	*24.6*
No. of moves	*51*
No. of clauses	*64.8*
Type of Move	
Opening moves	*9.6*
Continuing moves	*18.8*
React: responding: supportive	*16.4*
React: responding: confronting	*0.2*
React: rejoinder: supportive	*3*
React: rejoinder: confronting	*2.2*

Graph 6. 2: Seminar mean



1= opening moves
2= continuing moves
3= responding supportive moves
4= responding confronting moves
5 = rejoinder supporting moves
6 = rejoinder confronting moves

In order to analyse seminar talk for its formal or informal properties and to provide evidence of where seminar discourse may be situated along a continuum of informal and formal talk I needed some comparative data. I used two published samples of sequences of talk - a sequence of informal dinner party talk (from Eggins & Slade 1997:216) and a sample of formal classroom talk (from Edwards & Mercer (1994:196) coded for move functions (Tables 6.2 and 6.3 and Graph 6.3).

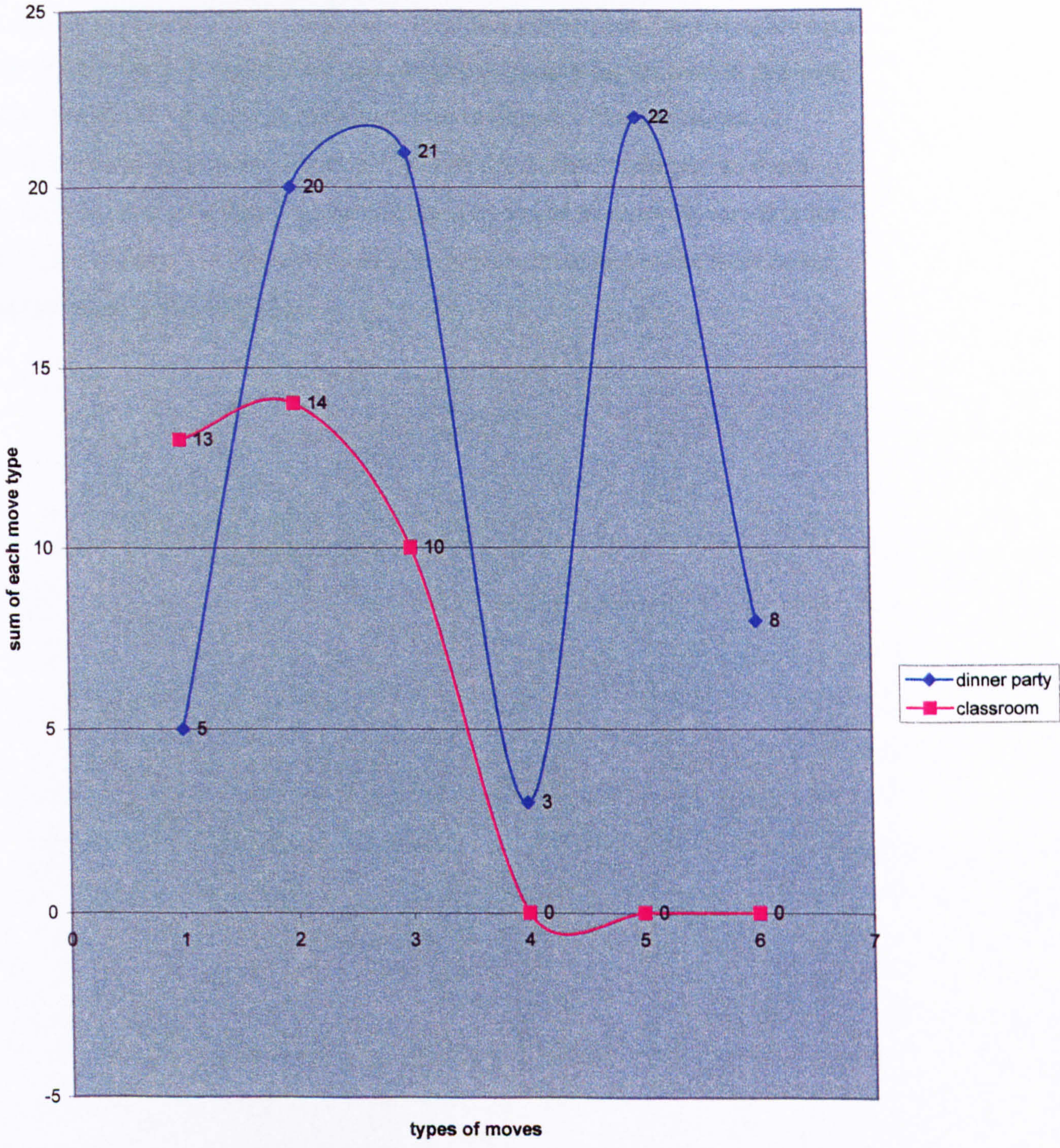
Table 6.2: A typification of informal talk, the dinner party (Eggins & Slade 1997:216)

Speech function	**Participant 1**	**Participant 2**	**Participant 3**	***Total***
No. of turns	19	21	18	***58***
No. of moves	24	28	27	***79***
No. of clauses	35	40	35	***110***
Type of Move				
Opening moves	5	0	1	***5***
Continuing moves	8	8	4	***20***
React: responding: supportive	4	5	12	***21***
React: responding: confronting	1	2	0	***3***
React: rejoinder: supportive	6	8	8	***22***
React: rejoinder: confronting	3	3	2	***8***

Table 6.3: A typification of formal talk – the classroom (Edwards & Mercer 1994:196)

Speech function	**Speaker 1 teacher)**	**Speaker 2**	**Speaker 3**	**Speaker 4**	**Speaker 5**	***Total***
No. of turns	21	5	2	1	2	***31***
No. of moves	27	5	2	1	2	***37***
No. of clauses	32	5	2	1	2	***42***
Type of Move						
Opening moves	13					***13***
Continuing moves	14					***14***
React: responding: supportive		5	2	1	2	***10***
React: responding: confronting						
React: rejoinder: supportive						
React: rejoinder: confronting						

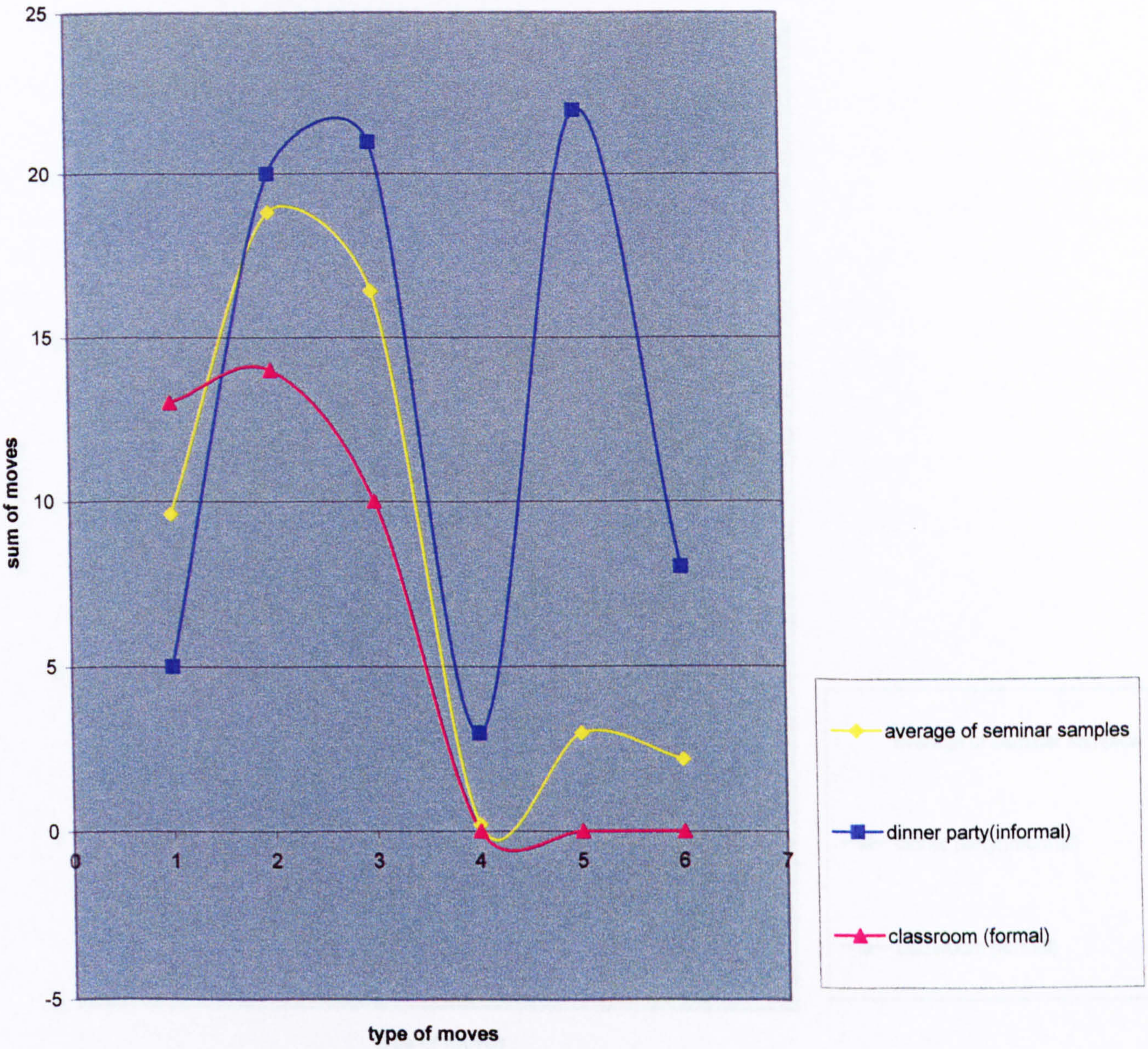
Graph 6.3: Comparison of dinner party (informal) and classroom (formal) moves



1= opening moves
2= continuing moves
3= responding supportive moves
4= responding confronting moves
5 = rejoinder supporting moves
6 = rejoinder confronting moves

These tables show the very different patterning of talk in three different contexts. The formal classroom genre is characterised by the traditional I-R-F model with the teacher dominating and pupils providing responses. Only the teacher opens moves and the patterning is very segregated. The informal dinner party by comparison has a much more even spread of move making. The three participants have roughly equal numbers of turns, moves and clauses and although opening moves tend to rest with one, more dominant, participant, the interaction is shared. Plotting the move sequences into graphical form (Graph 6.3) shows the different 'shapes' of these patterns of talk. Informal dinner party talk has a bi-modal shape with conversation batting backwards and forwards between participants compared to the more static structure of formal classroom talk.

Graph 6.4: Comparison of moves in seminar talk with moves in formal and informal talk



1= opening moves
2= continuing moves
3= responding supportive moves
4= responding confronting moves
5 = rejoinder supporting moves
6 = rejoinder confronting moves

By adding the aggregate data from Graphs 6.2 and 6.3 it is possible to compare the shapes of formal, informal and seminar talk (Graph 6.4). Comparison shows a more frequent turn-taking in dinner party and classroom talk than seminar talk (c.2.6 clauses per turn for the seminar talk, 1.8 for dinner party and 1.2 for classroom talk). This suggests there may be a more careful structuring of input in seminars with more focus on individual speakers putting across points of view before other speakers come in. Opening moves constitute 6% of all moves in dinner party talk, 35% in classroom talk with seminar talk having 18% of this type of move. This suggests that informal talk such as dinner parties keep conversation going by the use of strategies other than openings, such as the much higher proportion of responding, confronting and particularly of rejoinder moves. Eggins & Slade argue that the use of rejoinder moves, particularly rejoinder confronting moves, are a key feature of informal talk. These provide a major resource to keep an exchange going and draws on Kress's claim that the text is born in the exploration of difference (Kress (1985) cited in Eggins & Slade 1997:224).

In every type of move, seminar talk falls in the space between formal and informal talk. This backs up earlier analysis in chapter 4 on how complexity in seminar talk is achieved, and suggests that seminar talk occupies a position between formal and informal talk.

MONOLOGIC, DIALOGIC OR HETEROGLOSSIC TEXTS?

Much typical classroom talk can be understood as monologic, with one voice - usually that of the teacher - dominating. The common form of monologic communication in higher education is the lecture which focuses on knowledge transmission with interaction being mainly procedural following the I-R-F- format. Here the teacher is at the centre of discourse. Seminars contained segments of monologic communication, carried out by the student presenting his or her paper. Following this segment all the seminars were successful in moving on to some dialogue.

In a dialogic situation teachers and students explore issues together, there is some shifting of power, and permission to talk, from teacher to student. The view of knowledge in this model is different – students are encouraged to think for themselves, making connections and using personal experiences. This shift puts the student towards the centre of dialogue but it is a shared relationship with 'permissions' to occupy that space resting with the teacher. In the seminars, students did indeed engage in dialogic communication within the 'rules' set by the tutor and at times with an active tutor presence. However, a relatively small number of students were orally active. Of those that did speak many were contributions were not heard or valued by their peers. Students do not appear to regard their peers' contributions as necessarily having status as knowledge which raises issues of how students see knowledge as legitimated. If legitimate knowledge rests with the tutor or other academics, this reinforces student status as novices. Far from being a dialogue, individual student contributions were often monologues conducted in sequences with little real interaction.

There were however several heteroglossic incidents in the seminars. Heteroglossia, as discussed in chapter 2, is the concept that talk is not only shaped, uniquely, by the speaker but also includes other voices arising from the socio-cultural background of participants, their points of view, values and particular histories, and other contextual voices (Bakhtin 1986). In the classroom these contextual voices can be understood as the absent present voices representing the academic community and other cultural and political dimensions to education. Drawing on Volosinov's analysis of the multiple

meanings of words, the 'multi-accentuality of language' Bakhtin suggests that all words come already implicated with the meanings (and values) of others and that the assimilation of the words of others is part of the ideological construction of identity:

> "Our thought itself is born and shaped in the process of interaction and struggle with others' thought, and this cannot but be reflected in the forms that verbally express our thought as well" (Bahktin 1986)

While this process can be seen to be a permanent underlying condition of verbal exchange, it could be argued that there are occasions when the use of the voices of others is more explicit, as in the use of reported speech. Bakhtin uses the term "ventriloquation" where one provides a mouthpiece for language which is not one's own. (Bakhtin 1981:294) This can either be abstractly through appropriation, that is taking on others' words as if they were our own or actually through using other's voices such as in reported speech.

Maybin (1993) found significant evidence of heteroglossia in young children's informal talk, and suggested that this was part of their development of understanding and knowledge and identity. Just like the children in Maybin's study, seminar participants appear to be using multiple voices to help in the construction of subject knowledge and in negotiating their new identity within the academic community. Patterns of heteroglossia emerged both within the seminars, the group debriefs and in the interviews. These can take the form of 'multi-part' reporting of internal conversations - maybe to give a richness of ideas, or as a way of drawing on other experiences, or a form of distancing from the views expressed. There are links here to the importance of citation in written academic discourse, although heteroglossic incidents in the seminars is not just used in that sense, they take a variety of forms as outlined below.

Quoting academic sources and therefore positioning as a part of an academic community. Such strategies cloak the user with the respectability and authority of the original speaker.

> Susan I think one of the key characteristics of a post modern tourism is a move for nostalgia and to preserve the past in a way because - and there's another quote from Campbell, 'We aim to look to the past to make some sense of the chaotic future'
>
> *Group I Tourism*

In this example, signalling that a quote is coming suggests a self-consciousness that betrays Susan's lack of familiarity with quoting sources.

This 'academic name dropping' was used in many of the seminars, particularly where participants had prepared quotes to augment their argument and to give authority. The use of such quotes is largely achieved with paralinguistic markers of unease, such as shuffling and giggling. In their introduction to their groups, both Tracey (tourism) and Simon (media studies) used this type of approach. However, there were subtle differences between groups. In the other tourism group where a source is mentioned by name, it is signalled as such "as McCannell states"; "I have a quote here from Hewison". The choice of language here reflects a self-consciousness suggesting the group are playing to the audience of the tutor who will be looking for examples.

Such strategies were not used in media studies group D where a quote is paraphrased into a more casual framing:

> Simon I want to come back to um, a question I posed earlier about um the misogynistic John Osborne saying how the female must come toppling down to where she should be - on her back.
>
> *Group D Media Studies*

This paraphrasing suggests that Simon is demonstrating his ability to understand by processing and in turn owning this debating point. However, a self-consciousness and hesitancy in using actual names or other specialist lexis is often manifested in calls for back up from other group members, for example

> Simon {yeah well half the actors were actually, well I say half, that's wrong, but the guy from *Room at the Top* he wasn't even English was he? *(asked as a question)*
>
> *Group D Media Studies*

Using irony to express a point of view. In this example from the media seminar group where the three female students, initiated by Hilary, quote official discourse and adopt female subject position to represent indignation and scorn:

1	Simon	they were the scapegoats for all of society' injustices weren't they
2	Celia	It was all our fault
3	Simon	[laughs]
4	Celia	then it always was
5	Hilary	it was difficult for women at the time to fit into society though wasn't it
6	Anna	no, because there was no place for them.
7	Hilary	they were either in the home; one minute they were being told to go back to
8		the home and be mother and whatever else, housewife, next minute
9		{then we need
10	Celia	{after having six years at {work
11	Hilary	{yeah, we need your money or your labour to
12		provide for the country. You know. What are we supposed to do?. And
13		then, (pause) when we have got delinquents
14	Hilary	(laughs) these youth delinquents, its blamed on the women - that they
15		needed - because they weren't at {home.
16	Anna	{yeah
17	Hilary	thank {you!
18	Anna	{and they're not doing their job properly (laughs)

Group D Media Studies

Hilary's response becomes increasingly personal and sarcastic and she is encouraged in this by the other women in the group. The episode provided an opportunity for the female group members to show solidarity and opposition to the one male group member - appropriating his 'they' in line 1 to 'our' in line 2. Throughout this interaction, Hilary takes turns in playing a particular role with very subtle use of personal pronouns demonstrating conflicting patterns identification and using a rising pitch and volume. Using 'women' and 'they' in lines 5 and 7; to 'we' in line 12 and back to 'they' in line 15. The final crescendo of the ironic 'thank you' with the emphasis on the 'you' has a finality and sarcasm, where the meaning , ie we women can't win, contradicts the actual words used.

As an inner dialogue and a means to convey inner thoughts. In this example an analysis of personal motivation to visit a tourist attraction:

> Lynne I think that's what people go there for – I did – I didn't go to say "that's a nice building" I went to think," Oh my God, this happened here, that happened there and", ( ) do you know what I mean,
>
> *Group I Tourism*

Here we seem to have an example of what Vygotsky calls "inner speech" (1986), an internal thought process, where Lynne is trying out dialogues she might have had as a way of sorting out her thoughts. This statement both articulates what Lynne was thinking and also provides a marker of identity and difference for her as a thinking tourist, it serves to construct and position her as a student of tourism, distinct from other tourists.

In the next example, the inner dialogue is attributed by extension to others, but serves to explain how a heritage site can 'speak' to visitors. As such it provides evidence of how Susan is developing her own thinking about the issue:

> Susan with your industrial heritage, it relates, it relates to people you know, its something people go, "oh my granddad was a miner " or you know its got to relate to something or otherwise you're going to move past it.
>
> *Group I Tourism*

As a type of shorthand to express a popularly held view, whilst maintaining a distance from it. In the following example "let's not do it again" is used as a catch-all phrase to sum up a perspective on war and is invoked as a rationale for battlefield memorials - to teach a lesson to future generations.

> Alice well its, not necessarily, because so many battle fields are covered with memorials that people do see it as not really glory that hundreds of people did sacrifice their lives for the peace of their country and
>
> Tracey {that's true
>
> Alice {and its also "lets not do it again" and you know but you do have to sort out what's glorified and what isn't
>
> *Group I Tourism*

As a method of interrogating, or holding a dialogue with, a written text. In the following example, Stella quotes a line from the play the group are discussing, "I've

always put him first", to set up an issue for analysis. She puts forward her perspective on this which indicates that such sentiments are old fashioned. She does this by using reported speech to make her point, "we don't do that anymore". She prefaces this with contemporary idiomatic form of speech borrowed from American teen culture, "which is kind of", a statement addressed to her peers:

> Stella she does say 'I've always put him first' which is kind of – 'we don't do that anymore'
>
> *Group L Performing Arts*

Within this short extract Stella has conjured up the absent voice of the character in the play by ventriloquating the character's words (and by implication the words of the playwright), draws her peers into the conversation and then produces a collective response on behalf of women in general "we don't". Using this complex structure, Stella manages to maintain her street cred with her peers while making a pertinent point about changing social mores. An example of what Halliday calls choreographing in spoken language (Halliday 1989:87).

Summary

In this chapter further modelling of the functional structure of seminars in relation to other conversational forms suggests that on a continuum between formal and informal talk genres, seminar talk occupies a problematic and moving space. This supports other findings reported in Chapter 4 that in its structure seminar talk is a hybrid talk variety. While seminars retain features of informal talk between friends, they are also artificially established to achieve a specific purpose and have features of more formal talk varieties. Seminar talk is thus highly unusual, its conventions unfamiliar, and participation takes place with a high degree of uncertainty.

Other contextual framings provoked by the institutional setting and the seminar's role in the grading of student performance serve to reinforce uncertainty. One of strategies deployed by participants to negotiate this uncertainty was the use of heteroglossia. Heteroglossic moments were frequent and can be seen as a strategy for constructing selfhood. They provide a safe haven where participants try out

understandings, ideas, new identities, hold debates, draw in other absent characters without being personally implicated, because its not their speech. In a Goffmanian sense, they provide a way of carrying out back stage rehearsals and as such to constitute a rich resource for learning.

CHAPTER 7: THE SEMINAR AS SOCIO-PEDAGOGIC SPACE

In this chapter I develop the heuristic model outlined in chapter 1; that of the seminar as a socio-pedagogic space with three intersecting planes –

The Institutional plane
The Individual plane
The Textual plane

The development of this model has been a key outcome of this research. Situations involving communicative social interaction involve a number of aspects - semiotic, activity, material, political and socio-cultural. (Hymes 1972). The seminar involves people using language to carry out a particular activity, at a particular place and time, amid constraints of status and power with imperatives of sustaining personal relationships and values. As such the socio-pedagogic space of the seminar is at once physical and metaphysical. Real individuals make real seminar texts in real places. But in so doing they invoke meta-narratives of education, its purposes, processes and ideologies. They weave their story into the bigger story and are in turn drawn into a dialogic relationship with implications for their own identity. The socio-pedagogic space model is speculative. It draws on theory and the empirical data discussed in this dissertation, and is presented as an attempt to make sense of the complex processes at work in the seminar room.

The model offers a way of promoting thinking about the seminar as a vehicle for pedagogic communication, described by Bernstein as 'the organisational, discursive and transmission practices in all pedagogic agencies' (1996:17).

The Institutional plane

Meanings are situated in the actual contexts in which they are used. The physical space and its organisation, the relationships between members – tutors and students, the types of communication which are valued, the importance assigned to judgements

of difference (through assessment and grading) all impact on the construction of the particular institutional discourse at work in the institutional plane. This is not to suggest that the institutional plane is fixed or that it exists outside of its discursive practices. Rather that the relationship between discursive practices (language, behaviours, attitudes) and contexts is a *reflexive* one, each simultaneously reflecting and constructing the other (Drew and Heritage 1992).

Although all educational institutions will be operating within a collective political discourse of the purposes and processes of education (itself subtly changing and contested), there is space for local difference. Institutional forces, such as rules and procedures and the induction of newcomers into these, all help to ensure continuity of practice and the continued reproduction of the institution. Different institutions, or their sub-sets, exert different forms and degrees of control on participants. In addition, individual tutors bring to the institutional plane other ideologies formed in previous professional careers, for example as scientists, artists, accountants, which have their own discursive practices. Through the tutor's role in preparing students for future learning and careers, ideologies linked to the field of study, what it means to be an engineer for example, will be foregrounded. However, there may be ideological conflict between the discourses associated with a particular profession (to do with status, control, certainty and maintaining difference from other professions) and the educational discourses of being a student of a particular profession (low status, lack of control, uncertainty). There are thus likely to be competing ideologies at work in the institutional plane.

The Individual plane

Individuals share membership of particular social groupings and institutions where they learn the discourses associated with those institutions. Individuals bring their own discursive histories shaped by social position to any interaction. Interactions with others who come from different backgrounds prompt dialogues which aim to resolve this 'discursive difference' (Kress 1985). This plane conceptualises individuals bringing to the seminar their fluency in a range of social languages, linked to previous experiences and identities.

Every language is comprised of different social languages (Bakhtin 1981) which draw on the grammatical resources of the host 'native' language. Individuals become adept at code switching, changing from one social language to another. However, language access is inequitable, individuals do not automatically have access to the whole range of social languages. Researchers have found that non-traditional students in particular are more likely to experience alienation from higher education because of a lack of connectivity to the language which is used (Lynch and O'Riordan 1998; Lawler 1999; Sullivan 2001). However all students in the seminar can be seen as outsiders to the academy, novices learning the language of higher education – they are semi-speakers of academic English. In the linguistic choices they make in the seminar, they are revealing internal processes of re-forming individual consciousness through negotiating the language of higher education.

The Textual plane

This plane considers the textual form of the seminar. Kress argues that 'where there is no difference no text comes into being' (Kress 1985:12). While some features of particular seminars will be generated in the interaction between individuals and the particular contexts in which the seminar occurs, these will be set within the generic characteristics of seminars. Seminars appear to constitute a *hybrid talk variety*, occupying a space between the characteristics associated with spoken and written language and between formal and informal language exchanges. The seminar is therefore a unique linguistic event. While there may be some general knowingness about the codes and protocols of this type of exchange, based on understandings of education in general, and an awareness that seminars are part of the 'academic game', the uniqueness of the seminar form is likely to produce uncertainty in participants about the linguistic rules of engagement. Confusion about what constitutes an appropriate language register, if and when to keep the exchange going, what other 'voices' to invoke in seminar debate are likely to compound individual uncertainty.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS

Here I provide a summary of the main points raised through the research about seminar talk and the function of the seminar as a pedagogic practice.

<u>There is tension between the social and the cognitive aspect of seminars</u>.

During the research process it was difficult to disentangle the social and cognitive aspects of seminar talk. Although there were opportunities for joint construction of understandings, through the use of scaffolding and of exploratory talk, there were few opportunities for deep learning about topics in the field of study. Deep learning here is understood as part of a process of learning involving different stages:

Noticing – memorised representation
Making sense – reproduction of ideas
Making meaning – well integrated with linked ideas
Working with meaning – meaningful, reflective and well structured
Transformative learning – meaningful, reflective structured by learner, idiosyncratic or creative
Moon (2000)

Surface learning is likely to occur at stages 1 and 3, and deep learning at stages 4 – 5. In terms of learning about the topic under discussion, seminars supported learning at stages 1 – 3 but not beyond. Learning at stages 4 to 5 is likely to need reflection and review and these were not present in the seminars in this research. Written seminar papers were not linked directly to seminar discussion. Where tutors provided feedback on seminar performance, although this was supportive, it was cursory and did not provide a basis for personal development.

There were occasions, what I have called transgressive moments (page 92), where a more passionate personal involvement with the subject could have been a springboard for deeper learning. However, such moments were largely neutralised by group

intervention in 'rescuing' these departures from the academic discourse of the seminar.

The group solidarity necessary to provide such support is, however, often gained at the expense of establishing a context in which more combative debating strategies would be possible. The high incidence of cumulative talk strategies (Fisher 1994) which while being non-threatening, are also non-challenging, militates against groups engaging in debate and discussion. Cumulative talk enables participants to tentatively develop their social and personal relationships and is prevalent in aspiring friendship groups. While the seminar as a social event can be seen to provide opportunities for deploying language to achieve social effects, in so doing it can also constrain the achievement of learning about specific topics.

Learning in seminars is more likely to be related to skills development

There was plenty of learning going on in the seminars observed, primarily in the areas of learning to use specialist language, organising ideas, skills development, confidence building, and team work.

Students drew on a number of strategies to practice their skills in using specialist language, in particular through heteroglossic devices which, by invoking others' voices, enables distance to be maintained between unsure speakers and complex ideas. However, these heteroglossic incidents are likely to fall outside of the norms of traditional academic discourses and not be valued in the seminar.

Novice debaters used the seminar event as an opportunity to practice putting ideas together as arguments. They did this by using categorical statements to provoke responses, and by using developing moves involving opinion, extension, elaboration, enhancement and conclusion. These moves are often put together in one sequence, a strategy of 'talking to themselves'. In this *display of argument* they prompt a supporting chorus from their peers, thus reinforcing and building confidence.

Seminars are a hybrid talk variety which produces a context of uncertainty

In the model of language as a social semiotic (Halliday 1994a), one of the three metafunctions of language is that of textual meanings - meanings about the message itself, and how particular texts hang together and function. In analysing the textual metafunctions of seminars, their move patterns and how they achieve complexity, I have argued that they constitute a hybrid talk variety. Spoken language achieves complexity through grammatical means and written language through lexical means, however seminar talk achieves complexity through a fusion of lexical and grammatical means. Although it is obviously a spoken form, seminar talk retains elements of the structure of written language. The move patterning of informal spoken language, such as conversations between friends, has a bi-modal format. That of formal talk, such as teacher-led classroom exchanges, has a uni-modal format. Seminar talk occupies a complex and contested space between the patterns associated with formal and informal talk.

This analysis suggests that seminars are a highly unusual textual form and one which participants are unlikely to have come across in other settings. They are likely to provoke confusion particularly about the appropriate language register participants can use. Register can be understood to contain the variables of field – what activity or topic is possible; of mode - what type of feedback is possible and of tenor - what are the possible roles and relationships (Eggins 1994). To become accomplished at participating in seminars, students will need practice in understanding these different elements and other rules of seminar engagement. In effect, they need to learn how to participate in this specific context.

The seminar event produces discursive practices where tensions between socially situated identities are foregrounded.

Identities are enacted in and through language. Students in seminars are trying out the language of the academy and the range of socially situated identities, for example as student, researcher, and future professional, which become available to them in that context. However, students also bring with them other identities, for example as parent, worker, musician and engage in what Jenkins (1996) refers to as 'the internal-

external dialectic of identification'. Students in seminars are thus in a delicate state of transition between old and new identities, and their core conceptions of self. Far from being a smooth transition, it is one characterised by tension and turmoil. As 'new kids on the block' - whatever their age - involvement in the learning process brings with it uncertainties, re-assessments of 'who am I', threats posed by being judged, vulnerability and fear of failure. Involvement in institutional discourses produce conflict which are foregrounded in seminars where the emphasis is on speaking, and thus revealing, oneself

The contextual framing of the seminar exerts a strong influence for example with individuals taking on teacherly, or student roles, even when they, and not the tutor, are in control of the seminar space. For many students, their linguistic choices, reveal inner conflict about identity, and form the space in which 'emergent identity' claims are made, affirmed or disaffirmed by peers (Holmes 2000). However, the powerful ideological forces at work in the seminar constrain the use of these events as opportunities to confront issues of identity in order to support perspective transformation (Mezirow 1978, 1981). I am not arguing that higher education seminars should become cosy mutually supportive events where conflict is effaced. On the contrary I am arguing for a foregrounding of the conflicts and the discursive processes at work as a way of raising consciousness and of achieving what Fairclough calls Critical Language Awareness (Fairclough 1989:239).

CHAPTER 9: CRITICAL REFLECTION

Research tools:

In this chapter I critically reflect on the research process and draw out areas for subsequent research activity in this field. Thinking back over the EdD research journey and wondering what I would do differently, it is hard not to answer 'everything'. It was only in the final hectic six months of data analysis and writing that I felt I had developed a real understanding of the research process and emerging outcomes and then wanted to start it all again and 'do it properly'. However, there were, of course some moments that could be seen as turning points.

Although I set out with good intentions, my research diary keeping was spasmodic, but in reviewing it to write this chapter, one comment stands out – "what are they learning and how will I know?" I experienced real problems in focusing from my research questions into data analysis which yielded evidence. At times it seemed impossible ever to arrive at anything like sensible inferences. I feel that the breakthrough into different and very productive ways of working came about when I decided to use a systemic functional linguistics approach to analysing seminar talk. Although I had come across Halliday's work as a model for how language and context work together, I do not have a background in linguistics and I did not explore his methodology for analysing the linguistic aspects of language. However in struggling for more meaningful forms of analysing what was going on in the seminars, two books changed my outlook.

Firstly my interest in student identity had been developed through reading the literature on academic literacies (Lea 1998; Lea & Street 2000) which prompted further exploration of links between writing and identity. This lead me to Ivanic's work where she uses a Hallidayan approach to explore the linguistic aspects of student writing as a way of considering how identity construction is discoursally constructed (Ivanic 1997). This made sense to me as it offered a way into evidencing markers in seminar discourse.

Secondly, from the pilot research, my initial intuition that seminars retain some of the characteristics of casual chats between friends, and that there may be tensions between this and the academic context in which they take place, lead me to find out more about the structure of casual conversation. Eggins and Slade's *Analysing Casual Conversation* (1997) was a revelation. Here was a practical methodology for taking apart segments of talk to find out what was going on. It was a methodology that was to prove very fruitful in analysing data.

The downside was that I had to learn quickly about functional linguistics, and indeed about linguistics in general, through devouring course books on English Grammar (Freeborn 1995). It was a steep learning curve.

Coming to this methodological approach quite late in the research process meant I had to adapt my working methods rather than planning the research with this aim in mind. I had to retrospectively identify segments of talk which could be analysed in this way, whilst trying to ensure that these were as similar as possible to allow comparisons which would generate meaningful data. The findings using this methodology were exciting and do seem to indicate that seminar talk is a hybrid talk variety. However, there are several caveats to be made. The sample was small; my method of identifying segments of talk may have skewed the samples; and the samples are based on the transcripts not on timed segments. The micro-analysis of data samples was useful in highlighting patterns and functions of talk. However, these samples were a small component of each seminar's total amount of talk and using a different sampling method such as longer sequences or sequences from each speaker might have generated different outcomes. However I would argue that using *purposive* rather than *probability* sampling is appropriate where the research aim is to generate a wider understanding of social processes and where representativeness is less relevant (Arber 1997:71).

As I began to generate quantitative outcomes from my research I did consider whether tests of significance on the findings would be helpful. However, I do not use my data to make predictions about larger samples, rather data is used to describe the particular situation in which I carried out the research. I am also wary of the apparent security of numbers given in this approach – these numbers are based as much on subjective

methods as more intuitive approaches to data analysis. I came to using this research approach surreptitiously. I did not set out to generate quantitative data and yet that is what happened through an iterative process of engagement with the subject.

Reflections on data collection:

Seminars tended to happen towards the end of each semester and therefore opportunities for observation were limited to two periods of time each academic year. Inevitably there were timetabling clashes which limited my opportunities to gather data. I spent some time piloting recording methods, audio, video, audio and video, and audio supplemented by observational notes in order to work out the best approach. It proved very difficult for practical reasons to transcribe the seminars that had only been recorded on video being difficult to both watch the video and hear clearly the contributions of all participants.

Co-researching

Although I endeavoured to work with students as co-researchers I was not very successful in this. I do not believe that my research tools helped generate a collaborative approach and by leaving the college halfway through the research, I could not continue with opportunities for individual interviews. Working with tutors as co-researchers was more successful. I was able to discuss the outcomes of one-to-one interviews and the outcomes of individual seminars. The tutors in the sample have said that they benefited from taking part and are now trying out different ways of planning and carrying out seminars. This suggests that there may be a role for 'action learning sets' in educational institutions that focus on collaborative research into teaching and learning as a way of developing practice.

Taking the research further:

The data generated was helpful in developing my model of the seminar as a socio-pedagogic space, which, although intellectually challenging was helpful as a way of conceptualising the seminar space.

I judge that the way I have applied the systemic functional method provides a research tool which could be tested further in other research. It would benefit from being tested on a larger and wider sample, specifically I would identify the following areas for further research:

- a wider range of discipline areas and other seminar formats. It would be interesting to explore any differences in creative subjects such as 'the crit' in art and design and lab-based seminars in practical subjects such as engineering, technology and science.
- A wider range of institutions, such as 'old' and 'new' universities.
- A wider range of participants. My sample comprised a largely white female population with a heavy mature student contingent which is indicative of the institution's student intake. It would be helpful to explore institutions with a larger black and minority ethnic population as a comparison.

The above ideas are focused on gathering more diverse samples. However another approach would be to explore smaller samples in more detail over a longer period. I have extracted inferences from data samples, and other research findings in my literature review, which leads me to believe that students are in conflict about their identity and that this is manifested in their lexico-semantic choices. It would be helpful to explore this further through detailed co-researching with a sample of students through their undergraduate careers, from entry to exit. Such research could explore the links between individual life experiences and backgrounds, seminar participation and learning about the subject as well as changes over time in student's self-concepts. This was outside my research plan but it would provide an additional perspective on student learning through talk.

Another approach to provide more focused analysis would have been to choose a particular element of seminar talk, for example talking about the topic, heteroglossic moments, transgressive moments and investigate the frequency and types of discursive strategies used by students in these segments. However, it was not until near the end of the research that I had identified these as key elements. I am particularly convinced that the use of heteroglossia would repay further research.

In addition a research project which tests out the ideas for developing seminar practice identified in chapter 10 would be very helpful in marking out a good practice model for seminars.

CHAPTER 10: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

My research journey has taken me from a realisation of the enormous richness of the seminar as a resource for learning, and of the underdevelopment of that resource as a pedagogic activity. My explorations suggest that there is a lack of consistent understanding amongst all participants of seminar form, function and purpose. That, to use Bernstein's term, seminars are 'weakly classified' (Bernstein 1996:20), with their discursive practices characterised by a lack of explicitness about the knowledge, skills and outcomes supposedly being developed. Tutors and students have different approaches to seminars. Tutors tend to use seminars to help students develop understanding of topics and to develop communication skills; students tend to use the seminar to achieve social effects, identifying and maintaining interpersonal relationships. The research suggests that socio-cultural elements are far more influential on the outcome of seminars than teaching and learning design.
Fisher argues that one of the four characteristics of effective educational talk is that participants understand the primary purpose of the talk as educational rather than social (Fisher 1996). Participants in the seminars had understanding of the educational aims of these events and yet deployed their resources to achieve social as well as educational aims. I suggest that it is a false dichotomy both to identify the educational as separate from the social when considering small group discussions and to suggest that talk which accomplishes social effects is not effective educational talk. Social and educational elements are intertwined in small group discussions in educational settings and represent a significant resource for learning. However, lack of explicitness of learning outcomes and of the socio-cultural context leads to wasted opportunities for learning with few identified attempts to maximise the potential of seminars as a learning experience either before, during or after the event.
Later in this chapter I will offer some ideas for how seminars can be used more effectively as a teaching and learning tool, and particularly of the potential they have in developing thinking and oral communication skills. However, firstly I want to explore the context of oral skills in higher education developing the issues raised in the literature review, as these have key implications for professional practice.

ORAL SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In my literature review, I explored the background to the key skills debate. This identified the relationship between graduateness and core skills/personal transferable skills and raised concerns about how far skills can be separated from knowledge and understanding together with scepticism of the actual transferability of key skills (Lueddeke 1998; Holmes 2000; Fallows and Steven 2000).

The UK Government endorsed the recommendations of the Dearing Report for institutions to develop graduate's employability skills and to make explicit through subject benchmarks the range of skills, knowledge and understanding that students will develop (DfEE 1998). Assessment against these benchmarks will form part of peer review process carried out by the inspection arm of higher education, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Setting subject benchmarks has been undertaken by groups of subject specialists on behalf of, and in consultation with, the broader subject community. As at June 2002, 22 subjects have had benchmarking standards agreed[1].

I reviewed all subject benchmark statements, analysing them for identification of oral communication skills within the subject or generic skills benchmarks and whether there was guidance on teaching, learning and assessment methods to deliver this part of the curriculum. The outcomes of this review are included in Table 10.1.

[1] See www.qaa.ac.uk

Table 10.1: The place of oral communication skills in subject benchmarking

Key: x = not mentioned in this statement
✓= mentioned in this statement

Subject	Subject specific skills	Generic/ transferable skills	Teaching & Learning methods	Assessment
Archaeology	x	✓	Seminars	1. Seminar contributions assessed directly or indirectly 2. Oral presentations
Architecture	✓	✓	1.The crit 2. dialogue 3. seminars	1. 'pin up' sessions 2. Seminars
Business & Management	x	✓	x	x
Chemistry	x	✓	x	Oral presentations
Classics and ancient history	x	✓	Seminar or other forms of small group discussion	x
Computing	x	x	Presentations	x
Earth sciences	x	✓	x	x
Economics	x	x	Seminars	Oral presentations
Education studies	x	✓	x	x
Engineering	x	✓	Seminars	x
English	✓	✓	1. Seminars 2. Engage in dialogue	Oral seminar performance
Geography	x	✓	Seminars and other small group formats	Oral presentations
History	✓	✓	1. Seminars and forms of group work 2. Participation in group discussions; 3. Give presentations	1. Seminar 2. Formal paper presentation
Law	x	✓	Tutorial performance or mooting	x
Librarianship and info. management	x	✓	Seminars	Oral presentations
Philosophy	✓	✓	1. Seminars including those where students introduce topics 2. Other student led discussion groups	Live presentations and debates ranging from student presentations to viva voce exams

Politics and International relations	x	✓	1. Seminars 2. Group discussions	Oral and written assignments
Religious studies	x	✓	1. Seminars 2. Small group work 3. Giving and discussing presentations	Oral presentations
Sociology	x	✓	Seminars	Addressing an audience
Social policy	x	✓	Seminars	Individual or group presentations
Social Work	x	✓	1. Case presentations 2. Seminars	Case study presentation
Tourism	x	✓	Small group formats	x

There was considerable variation in the style of each subject benchmark statement, from generic to very specific outlines of the characteristics of a typical honours degree course. Therefore, it is important to bear in mind that the absence of a mention of oral communication skills does not mean that these are not valued within the subject, but that the subject may take a more generic approach to benchmarking. Nevertheless, the benchmarks remain powerful statements, given their place within QAA review and therefore the presence or absence of oral communication skills in them is likely to have an impact on the curriculum.

All bar two subjects (20 subjects, 90% of the total) list oral communication skills within the generic or transferable skills statement and four subjects (18%) also list oral skills within the subject-content statements. This provides a strong context for the inclusion, in some form, of the development of oral skills within university undergraduate education. However, the analysis of how these skills could be delivered and whether or not they should be assessed shows a less secure picture. Eighteen subjects (81%) identify typical teaching and learning events where oral skills can be developed but only 12 (55%) identify the assessment of oral skills, and methods to carry out assessment, within their benchmark statements. The absence of oral skills within the assessment of a subject suggests a continued devaluation of these skills in comparison with subject knowledge; their 'weak classification' in the curriculum a characteristic associated with low status (Bernstein 1996). With an increasing focus on student outcomes, and on time constraints on delivering the

curriculum, I would argue that curriculum elements which are not formally assessed are unlikely to receive much attention.

Although further research is needed to explore this in detail, the above table suggests that there are different attitudes towards oral skills within broad discipline domains. For example, the four subjects that identify oral skills within subject specific skills as well as generic skills all lie within the arts and humanities (Architecture, English, History and Philosophy). Curiously education studies only mentions oral skills as part of generic skills. Sixteen subjects (73%) explicitly mention the seminar as a teaching and learning strategy although it is unclear whether seminars are proposed as the main vehicle for developing or assessing oral skills. Where oral skills are assessed these tend to be through 'presentations'. Analysis of the place of oral skills in subject benchmarking suggests that there is little embedding of these skills within the higher education curriculum and that in particular approaches to teaching and assessment remain under-developed.

DEVELOPING SEMINAR PRACTICE: ISSUES ARISING FROM RESEARCH:

Most students in higher education will experience seminars. They provide a rich resource for developing student learning. However, my research suggests that actual seminar practice misses these opportunities and often results in a disappointing experience for tutors and students. Poor articulation by tutors of the rationale for using seminars are being used seems to lead to a In part Seminars seems to be used to develop competenceat all in teaching and learning programmes seems to be

Although I would not claim that the outcomes of my research are generalisable across all of higher education, I would argue that these outcomes support and enhance other research (Jaques 1992; Griffiths 1999) which suggests that seminars are under-developed as a teaching and learning strategy. Under-development takes the form of poor specification of the purpose, structure, and learning outcomes of seminars, in particular:

- Little articulation of 'ground rules' and therefore missed opportunities for enhancing student learning, particularly in developing reasoning skills
- Poor integration within the curriculum as a whole, missing opportunities for the development of oral skills.
- Little negotiation with students about aims, content and format.
- Where it occurs, assessment of seminars is weakly specified and not linked to learning outcomes.
- Students are poorly prepared for participation and have few opportunities to explore seminar processes, to try out and develop their skills
- There are few opportunities for feedback, critical reflection and review, thus missing opportunities for deep learning and understanding.

Adapting models for improving critical reasoning in children's small group work (Mercer et al 1999) could be very helpful for seminar practice. Here ground rules for participation in group work were established which impacted on both the type of language used, the deployment of exploratory talk, and the development of reasoning skills. The rules include: equal participation in talk; careful consideration of all ideas; use of questions; participants to be respectful and attentive to each other; group agreement on outcomes. Establishing overt rules of engagement would help focus seminar talk and alleviate participant anxiety.

Structuring more opportunities to practice skills, and to review and reflect on practice, for example by using video, would enhance students' ability to learn through experience, rather than just to 'survive' seminar participation. Students could establish their own aims for participation, working with peers to review achievement. In such a model, the focus shifts towards personal development and away from performance. Active engagement is likely to make the experience for students more meaningful and combat alienation from the process of study (Mann 2001).

Adopting a more student-centred approach might lead to differentiation of seminar formats across a student learning programme from entry to exit. Opportunities could be provided for new students to work with more experienced peers to facilitate scaffolding and learning within a community of practice.

While suggesting that clearer specification of seminars is needed I am not arguing for the replacement of vagueness with that of a box-ticking competence model. Others have taken issue with the competence approach in the teaching and assessment of oral communication skills (Cameron 2000, Torrance 1994). Torrance argues that the standardisation of procedures inherent in the assessment process together with the possibility of bias towards standard varieties of English on the teacher's part make formal assessment of oral skills problematic. In discussing communication skills, Cameron argues that the type of tick box, mechanical notion of competence are a long way from Dell Hymes' notion of communicative competence where speakers understand the choices involved and the implications of those choices:

> "A competent speaker is one who understands the 'grammar of consequences' and can judge which of the available choices will come closest to producing the desired interpretation in a particular set of circumstances. ... The ability to choose means to ends (and to choose between ends) is the essence of Hymesian communicative competence"" (Cameron 2000:180)

Such an approach to the development of oracy would entail a movement from a narrow reductionist approach linked to training for the work place through to a notion of empowerment of the individual, part of the emancipatory role of education. As such it would embrace the personal growth and cultural transformation agendas identified by MacLure (1994). I would endorse Cameron's position where she argues for the teaching of the subject of communication, which 'celebrates variety and complexity' and embraces the breadth of conversation, performance arts and public and formal speech within the taught curriculum (Cameron 2000:182). As well as teaching 'communication' as a subject, I would also argue for a focus on the processes as well as the products of learning. Whilst some of this change is ostensibly underway through the development of study skills modules within curricula, these tend to be reductive and arise from a deficit model of competence, rather than developing understandings of the ideological processes at work in education. Exploring ideological processes and the discourses through which they are maintained can be allied to Fairclough's critical language awareness where individuals are made aware of discursive practices and thereby empowered to shape their own practices (Fairclough 1989). Fairclough offers a four stage model to raise

consciousness, involving reflection on experience; systematising experience; explanation and developing practice. Applying such a model could enable students to develop understanding of how discourse works within the seminar, exploring socially situated identities and, since the seminar is an educational site, exploring the creation of 'consciousness' (Bernstein, 1996:30). Such awareness does not take away ideological struggle but it reveals it, enabling understanding .

The notion of struggle is an important part of the learning process. Bahktin offers a useful model of the teacher's 'voice' as bringer of the 'authoritative' word which is hierarchical and distanced, which hails or interpolates, the subject (Bakhtin 1981). This is contrasted with the 'internally persuasive word' which is half ours and half someone else's and which in this fusion produces new creative thought.

> "The struggle and dialogic interrelationship of these categories of ideolgoical discourse (*the authoritative and the internally persuasive word*) are what usually determine the history of an individual ideological consciousness... Our ideological development is just such an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values (Bahktin 1981:342-345)

Struggle between different internally persuasive voices and the 'authoritative' word involves learning and choices. It is an active process within a Foucauldian contested terrain (Foucault 1977). To be a learner in a monologic seminar, where the voice of the tutor, and of the educational establishment, pervades is simply to learn to be positioned by official discourse, similar to rote learning in elementary school classrooms. By laying bare the ideological forces at work within the seminar space, and opening up the dialogic processes, learners can be empowered to negotiate their subject position through their learning journey. This is a key challenge for educational policy and a key area for amended professional practice emerging from this research.

In undertaking this research I found little attention had been given to exploring in depth the range of processes at work in seminars. There are many texts which provide guidance on developing teaching and learning practice, including facilitating

small group work. But in these texts seminars got barely a mention. While my own research is partial, is limited to one institution and a small spectrum of subject disciplines, it does provide insights and analysis which merits attention. It also provides a context for further research and the development of good practice models. As such it provides a foundation for making the language of higher education more accessible to learners.

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APPENDIX 1

Moves function coding: Seminar group C Cultural Studies

Cultural Studies

Speech function	Stephanie	Robert	Anna	Maggie	Total
No of turns	9	4	6	1	20
No of moves	27	11	12	2	52
No of clauses	40	11	16	3	70
Opening:					
Attending					
Offer					
Command					
Statement: fact	1				1
Statement:opinion	2		1	1	4
Question:open:fact					
Question:closed:fact					
Question:open:opinion	1				1
Question:closed:opinion					
Total	***4***		***1***	***1***	***6***
Continue					
Monitor	1		1		2
Prolong:elaborate	5	3	1	1	10
Prolong:extend	8	1	1		10
Prolong:enhance	3	1			4
Append:elaborate	1				1
Append:extend					
Append:enhance					
Total	***18***	***5***	***3***	***1***	***27***
React:responding:supportive					
Develop:elaborate					
Develop:extend	1				1
Develop:enhance					
Engage					
Register			2		2
Replay:accept					
Reply:comply					
Reply:agree		1			1
Reply:answer	1				1
Reply:acknowledge		1	1		2
Reply:affirm		1			1
Total	***2***	***3***	***3***		***8***
React:responding:confronting					
Disengage					
Reply:decline					
Reply:non-comply					
Reply:disagree					
Reply:withold					
Reply:disavow					
Reply:contradict					
Total					
React:rejoinder:supportive					
Track:check	1				1
Track:confirm			1		1
Track:clarify			1		1
Track:probe			1		1
Response:resolve			1		1
Total	***1***		***4***		***5***
React:rejoinder;confronting					
Challenge:detach					
Challenge:rebound					
Challenge: counter	2	2			4
Response:unresolve:refute					
Response:unresolve:re-challenge		1	1		2
Total	***2***	***3***	***1***		***6***

Conversational structure	Turn/ move	Speaker	Text (numbered for clauses)
O:I:statement: fact P:extend P:elaborate C:monitor	1a 1b 1c 1d	Stephanie	(i)We've never met the grandfather before. (ii)We've never met him, (iii)we've never met her. (iv)She's the mother of Cath and Reg. (v)Right ?
O:I:Closed question:opinion P:enhance P:extend P: elaborate P:extend R:s:acknowledge R:c:counter Track:check R:s:affirm R:re-challenge P:enhance P: elaborate P: extend P:elaborate R:c:counter P:elaborate R:s:agree P:elaborate R:re-challenge R:c:counter P:extend R:counter R:track:probe R:track:clarify R:answer	1e 1f 1g 1h 1i 2a 2b 3 4a 4b 4c 4d 4e 4f 5a 5b 6a 6b 7 8a 8b 9 10a 10b 11	 Robert Stephanie Robert Stephanie Robert Anna Stephanie Robert Anna Stephanie	(vi)and did you see the way that was going on ? (vii)It was very clever (viii)Because the camera brings you in, (ix)you're talking about a wider scale problem of homelessness, of overcrowding (x) and then the camera moves in to focus on him (xi) so we're back in the narrative (xii)we're back in with him (xiii) but the wider couple have discussed about homelessness. (i)humm (ii) I would say (i)do you understand ? (i)yeah, yeah, sure, but (ii)I would say that scene in particular is not about the particular characters at all, (iii) its about the overall picture. (iv) As you say (v) but we don't really learn any thing about grandad, (vi)I mean we know he's incontinent (i)but we see him crying, (ii)that second you're with him (i)Oh yeah yeah sure I mean (ii)I'm, not knocking (i)But you don't know anything about him though (i)You know he's incontinent , (ii) you know he's having trouble dressing (i)but we don't know anything about his character (i) but when we, but when we're first introduced to, (ii)I don't know if we see more of him throughout the film (i)no that's it

R:track:confirm R:s:acknowledge R:D:extend R:resolve	12a 12b 13 14a	Anna Stephanie Anna	(i) that's it, is it ? (ii)Oh right (i)Just one clip (i) that ruins what I was going to say
O:statement: opinion C:monitor P:elaborate P:extend	14b 14c 14d 14e		(i)The social realist films, A Kind of Loving for Example and Saturday Night and Sunday Morning you're not, (ii) I mean (iii) you're not, (iv)its not like a neat introduction to this character, (v)you know ? (vi) they take you through their lives , (vii)you learn more and more about them, (viii)but if that's all we see of him then that's not the same. (gap)
O:statement: opinion P:elaborate R:register A: elaborate P:extend P:enhance P:extend P:elaborate R:register	15a 15b 16 17a 17b 17c 17d 17e 18	Stephanie Anna Stephanie Anna	(i)Its not just personal (ii)its social consciousness as well umm (i)I mean Cathy,(ii) that was just an incident when that happened, (iii)but Cathy is probably the best thing (iv)because she's the narrator, (v) she's talking about these events (vi)and someone described it (vii)as when you turn over a photo album (viii)and someone's telling you about the photos umm
O:I:statement: opinion P:extend P:enhance P:extend	19a 19b 19c 19d	Stephanie	(i)Its very clever,(ii) its first person narrative (iii) but its past tense, (iv)looking back (v) which is very shocking, (vi)its very good (vii)and I think its just,(viii) I think it relates to the,(ix) its just interesting to watch the (advance)of the style(x) I think.
O:statement: opinion P:elaborate	20a 20b	Maggie	(i)In the end then social realism wasn't used to highlight the social political field (ii)its just as a genre(iii) its just a way of making a film

APPENDIX 2

Moves function coding:
Seminar Group D Media Studies

Media Studies

Speech function	Simon	Celia	Carole	Hilary	Total
No of turns	12	7	1	6	26
No of moves	17	14	1	9	41
No of clauses	19	19	1	10	49
Opening:					
Attending					
Offer					
Command					
Statement: fact				1	1
Statement:opinion	1	1			2
Question:open:fact					
Question:closed:fact					
Question:open:opinion				2	2
Question:closed:opinion					
Total	1	1		3	5
Continue					
Monitor		2			2
Prolong:elaborate	3	1		2	6
Prolong:extend	2	1		1	4
Prolong:enhance		3			3
Append:elaborate					
Append:extend				1	1
Append:enhance					
Total	5	7	0	4	16
React:responding:supportive					
Develop:elaborate					
Develop:extend	1				1
Develop:enhance					
Engage					
Register					
Replay:accept					
Reply:comply					
Reply:agree	5	4	1		10
Reply:answer		1			1
Reply:acknowledge	1				1
Reply:affirm					
Total	7	5	1		13
React:responding:confronting					
Disengage					
Reply:decline					
Reply:non-comply					
Reply:disagree					
Reply:withold					
Reply:disavow					
Reply:contradict					
Total					
React:rejoinder:supportive					
Track:check					
Track:confirm					
Track:clarify	1			1	2
Track:probe	1				1
Response:resolve	1			1	2
Total	3			2	5
React:rejoinder;confronting					
Challenge:detach					
Challenge:rebound					
Challenge: counter					
Response:unresolve:refute					
Response:unresolve:re-challenge	1	1			2
Total	1	1			2

Conversational structure	Turn/ move	Speaker	Text (numbered for clauses)
O:I:Statement: opinion	1a	S	(i)um that's what I don't like this term social realism
P:elaborate	1b		(ii) I think its very misleading. (ii)I think anyone can make social realism as long as its aesthetic
P:extend	1c		(iii) but at the end of the day like (iv) like we're sitting here talking about more things than the aesthetic things.
R:s:agree	2a	C	(i) Yeah , its interesting
C:monitor	2b		(ii) isn't it,
R:D:elaborate	2c		(iii) I just think , ground down working class was trendy
R:s:agree	3	S	(i)Oh yeah,
R:s:agree	4	Car	(i)yeah
R:s:agree	5a	C	(ii)definitely
R:D:extend	5b		(i) and that's why they put so much on the screen
R:s:agree	6	S	(i) ummm
O:I:question:open :opinion	7	H	(i)is that the bloke who directed something?
R:track:clarify	8	S	(i)which guy?
A:extend	9	H	(i)the guy whose quote you gave
R:track:probe	10a	S	(i)John Osborne?
P:elaborate	10b		(ii) He wrote the play Room at the
R:rechallenge	11	C	(i) Look Back in Anger
R:s:agree	12	S	(i) Oh, Look Back in Anger, sorry
O:I:statement: opinion	13	C	(i) I thought that was a horrible film
O:I:statement:fact	14	H	(i) so he's got that view
R:s:agree	15	S	(i)umm
A:extend	16	H	(i)how can that represent society and social realism?
R:D:extend	17	S	(i)that's what I , that's what
R:s:agree	18	C	(i)umm
R:track:clarify	19	H	(i)was that what you were trying to get at?*(asked as a question of Simon)* [laughs]
R:s:affirm	20	S	(i) no but
O:I:question:open :opinion	21a	H	(i) how can we say that (ii) that is from that period,
P:elaborate	21b		(iii) well it is from that period,
P:extend	21c		(iv)but how can we say that (v) what society is

			going on
P:elaborate	21d		(vi) if his personal preference is, ie authorship?
R:s:agree	22	S	(i)ummm
R:s:answer	23a	C	(i)well John Osborne is, (ii) I suppose you can say (iii) it is social realism (iv) from one point of view
P:enhance	23b		(v)because John Osborne is English, (vi) was raised in England
R:D:extend	24	S	(i) he was working class as well
R:s:agree	25a	C	(i) he was working class
R:D:enhance	25b		(ii) so he has grown up with these attitudes, (iii) so he didn't nick them off the doorstep
C:monitor	25c		(iv) did he?
P:enhance	25d		(v) so he must have got them from somewhere
O:I:statement: opinion	26a	S	(i) well I think he got them from somewhere
P:elaborate	26b		(ii) from seeing the roles of, um, men being reduced
P:extend	26c		(iii) and they weren't being the only active people in the society

APPENDIX 3

Moves function coding:
Seminar Group J Tourism

Tourism

Speech function	Alice	Alex	Lynne	Paul	*Total*
No of turns	7	7	1	1	*16*
No of moves	17	14	10	4	*45*
No of clauses	23	23	15	5	*66*
Opening:					
Attending					
Offer					*1*
Command		1			
Statement: fact					
Statement:opinion	1	1			*2*
Question:open:fact					
Question:closed:fact		1			*1*
Question:open:opinion					
Question:closed:opinion					
Total	*1*	*3*			*4*
Continue					
Monitor	1				*1*
Prolong:elaborate	1	2	1		*4*
Prolong:extend	5	2	4	1	*12*
Prolong:enhance	3	2	4	1	*10*
Append:elaborate	2				*2*
Append:extend					
Append:enhance	1				*1*
Total	*13*	*6*	*9*	*2*	*30*
React:responding:supportive					
Develop:elaborate	1				*1*
Develop:extend					
Develop:enhance					
Engage					
Register					
Replay:accept					
Reply:comply				1	*1*
Reply:agree		3			*3*
Reply:answer				1	*1*
Reply:acknowledge					
Reply:affirm		1			*1*
Total	*1*	*4*		*2*	*7*
React:responding:confronting					
Disengage					
Reply:decline					
Reply:non-comply					
Reply:disagree					
Reply:withold					
Reply:disavow					
Reply:contradict					
Total					
React:rejoinder:supportive					
Track:check					
Track:confirm					
Track:clarify	1				*1*
Track:probe					
Response:resolve		1			*1*
Total	*1*	*1*			*2*
React:rejoinder;confronting					
Challenge:detach					
Challenge:rebound	1				*1*
Challenge: counter					
Response:unresolve:refute					
Response:unresolve:re-challenge			1		*1*
Total	*1*		*1*		*2*

Conversational structure	Turn/ move	Speaker	Text (numbered for clauses)
O:I:statement: opinion	1a	Annie	(i)well it depends on how badly you need the company
C:monitor	1b		(ii)doesn't it?
R:s:agree	2	Andrew	(i)exactly,
A:elaborate	3a	Annie	(i)if you are after a short term fix
P:extend	3b		(ii)or if you are looking to a long term objective
P:elaborate	3c		(iii)which is what sustainability is all about.
P:extend	3d		(iv) And how badly the multi national wants to come in of course. (v) If they really want to get a foot in the country
P:enhance	3e		(vi)then they must umm abide by government policies
P:extend	3f		(vii) there has got to be a bit of give and take.
R:c:re-challenge	4a	Lucy	(i)they don't really in a way
P:enhance	4b		(ii)because if the country is so (.) like really don't have very much of an economy (iii)due to their like lack of industry
P:extend	4c		(iv)and the only industry that they like want (v) is tourism
P:enhance	4d		(vi) themultinational company will step in
P:extend	4e		(vii) and the government will
P:elaborate	4f		have to say like (viii) 'OK go ahead' (ix) obviously they will be concerned (x)about like whats going to happen to the country
P:extend	4g		(xi)but they need that money to provide jobs for people who live there,(.)
P:enhance	4h		(xii) so sometimes they have to look over their policies
P:extend	4i		(xiii)and change them to
P:enhance	4j		(xiv) so that the organisations will actually come into the country (xv)to provide
O:I:statement: opinion	5a	Andrew	(i)I think its important (ii)to realise that sustainability is more than just like the Spanish development.
P:elaborate	5b		(iii) People look at sustainability issues
P:extend	5c		(iv) and think about Benidorm (v) and think how bad it is (vi) and all the high rise hotels (vii)and what have you (viii)and all the implications that has ,

P:enhance	5d		(ix) that is really the worst case scenario you can get in terms of ill effects
P:extend	5e		(x)and subsequently sustainability is seen as a buzz word I think (xi) rather than something that is actually implemented
R:D:elaborate	6a	Annie	(i)I suppose that really when you look at Benidorm
P:extend	6b		(ii) and see their previous building policies (iii) that has rubbed off on other destinations (iv)where now they don't allow any building above two storey
R;s:agree	7	Andrew	(i)yeah
A:enhance	8	Annie	(i)so although they got it wrong(ii)other, um,
R:s:agree	9	Andrew	(i)exactly
A:elaborate	10a	Annie	(i)other agencies have, have taken this up
P:enhance	10b		(ii)so it has benefited people in other destinations. (2 sec)
R:S:affirm	11a	Andrew	(i)people have looked at (.) (ii)organisations who have put in
P:elaborate	11b		(iii) you know money into things,
O:I:command	11c		(iv) look at the Benidorm example
P:enhance	11d		(v) as that's all that happens when multinationals put capital into buildings
R:c:rebound	12a	Annie	(i)well it was all very, (ii)all done very quickly,
R:track:clarify	12b		(iii)wasn't it ?
R:s:resolve	13	Andrew	(i)yeah
P:extend	14a	Annie	(i)and um they just thought it was going to solve all their problems at the time (ii)and I suppose you get that right along the Costas (.)
P:enhance	14b		(iii) it was the speed of development (iv) that completely overtook the local population (3 sc)
O:question:closed :fact	15	Andrew	(i)Moving on. (ii) I'm not aware of any organisations policies on sustainability. (iii)Don't know if anyone else is?
R:s:comply	16a	Patrick	(i)I've got something here in Tourism and Sustainability
R:s:answer	16b		(ii) that says *(he reads from example)*
P:enhance	16c		(iii)This sort of shows that it needs the state (iv)to be involved with the cooperation of the multinationals
P:extend	16d		(v)and the companies investing the money.

APPENDIX 4

Moves function coding:
Seminar Group K Science

Science

Speech function	SS(tutor)	Katrine	Richard	Sheila	*Total*
No of turns	13	8	1	4	*26*
No of moves	34	17	1	7	*59*
No of clauses	42	20	1	7	*70*
Opening:					
Attending					
Offer					
Command					
Statement: fact	1	1			*2*
Statement:opinion	1	1			*2*
Question:open:fact	1				*1*
Question:closed:fact					
Question:open:opinion	1				*1*
Question:closed:opinion					
Total	***4***	***2***			***6***
Continue					
Monitor	4	2			*6*
Prolong:elaborate	3	1	1	1	*6*
Prolong:extend	5	3			*8*
Prolong:enhance	7	1			*8*
Append:elaborate	2			1	*3*
Append:extend	1	1		2	*4*
Append:enhance		1		1	*2*
Total	***22***	***9***	***1***	***5***	***37***
React:responding:supportive					
Develop:elaborate		1			*1*
Develop:extend					
Develop:enhance					
Engage					
Register					
Replay:accept					
Reply:comply					
Reply:agree	5	1			*6*
Reply:answer	1			1	*2*
Reply:acknowledge					
Reply:affirm					
Total	***6***	***2***		***1***	***9***
React:responding:confronting					
Disengage					
Reply:decline					
Reply:non-comply					
Reply:disagree					
Reply:withold					
Reply:disavow					
Reply:contradict					
Total					
React:rejoinder:supportive					
Track:check		1			*1*
Track:confirm					
Track:clarify				1	*1*
Track:probe					
Response:resolve	2				*2*
Total	***2***	***1***		***1***	***4***
React:rejoinder;confronting					
Challenge:detach					
Challenge:rebound					
Challenge: counter					
Response:unresolve:refute					
Response:unresolve:re-challenge		3			*3*
Total		***3***			***3***

Conversational structure	Turn/ move	Speaker	Text (numbered for clauses)
O:I:question:open: opinion	1	SS	(i) but is it just that we weren't brought up that way?
R:s:agree	2	K	(i)well yeah
A:elaborate	3a	SS	(i)well I don't know
P:enhance	3b		(ii)because I'm finding it hard not to fall about in hysterical laughter
P:elaborate	3c		(iii)when people do start talking about their ying and their yang
P:enhance	3d		(iv)but is that just my bias, (v) my too narrow (minded
R:D:elaborate	4	K	(i) (too scientifically minded
R:D:elaborate	5	R	(i)you have spent the last three years being trained
A:elaborate	6a	SS	(i)Three years teaching you lot to be scientists
A:extend	6b		(ii) and now we're on the ying and yang and chi (iii) and all that.
I:O:statement: opinion	7a	K	(i)I think perhaps (ii) one of the things with this is that you could do it alongside conventional
P:extend	7b		(iii) and then perhaps you wouldn't know (iv)which one was helping you
P:enhance	7c		(v) but I don't know,
P:elaborate	7d		(vi) maybe stress relief (vii) or relaxing isn't such a bad thing.
O:I:question:open: fact	8a	SS	(i)we would have a mechanism for that wouldn't we?
P:enhance	8b		(ii) because if you believe something was working
P:extend	8c		(iii) and it was going to affect those downward pathways (iv) and we were saying about keeping the gate open, (v) if somebody has said this will work
P:enhance	8d		(vi) then you will switch those descending pathways off
C:monitor	8e		(vii)wont you?
P:enhance	8f		(viii) so in effect you are giving yourself a chance by closing a gate.
R:s:answer	9a	S	(i)It would be a placebo,
R:track:clarify	9b		(ii) I (mean ?
R:resolve	10	SS	(i) (well yes
A:elaborate	11a	S	(i)they give them two different groups some tablets or something or other
A:extend	11b		(ii)and they found that 30% of the ones that took the placebo worked *rising cadence +?*

R:resolve A:enhance P:elaborate	12 13a 13b	SS S	(i)absolutely (i)they were given sugar tablets, (ii) so
O:I:statement:fact P:extend P:enhance P:extend C:monitor P:elaborate P:extend	14a 14b 14c 14d 14e 14f 14g	SS	(i)Because the body already has mechanisms that can actually help us deal with the pain (ii) the difficulty is whether we can use those mechanisms (iii) now most of us don't have the power to actually to convince ourselves (iv)that hey its alright (v)and close the gate (vi) what this is doing is giving us that ability, (vii) isn't it?, (viii) its giving us something else to hold on to (ix) and that will close that down.
R:re-challenge P:extend R:s:agree A:extend A:enhance R:s:agree C:monitor R:s:answer	15a 15b 16 17a 17b 18 19 20	K SS K SS K SS	(i) but then the other part of the whole Chinese idea is that they will use herbs (ii) and there's lots of other parts (i) yeah (i) facets to it too , (ii) so perhaps by taking one bit out of it() (i)Yeah (i)you know (i)we probably are doing it a disservice (ii) by looking at it (simply
O:I:statement:fact C:monitor P:extend R:s:agree A:extend R:s:agree	21a 21b 21c 22 23 24a	K SS S SS	(i) but then they treat the whole body as a whole (ii) don't they? (iii) and I think there is perhaps some value in that anyway (i)umm (yeah (i)relaxation part as well (i)yeah (.)
O:I:statement: opinion P:enhance C:monitor P: elaborate C:monitor P:extend	24b 24c 24d 24e 24f 24g		(ii) certainly what K said about treating the body as a whole is something we can probably learn (iii) because the way medicine is set up (iv) we do tend to deal with Mrs Jones's knee (v) don't we?, (vi) I mean the rest of Mrs Jones can go hang (vii) you know? (viii) and that is probably a very relevant thing too (ix) and unfortunately in your case

			study you are going to have to treat Mrs Jones (x) or whatever she is (xi) as a whole, so.
R:re-challenge	25a	K	(i)but that could be like
R:track:check	25b		(ii) you know,
R:re-challenge	25c		(iii) leads to the, old people taking tablets for this and that and whatever
R:s:agree	26	SS	(i)absolutely

APPENDIX 5

Moves function coding:
Seminar Group L Performing Arts

Performing Arts

Speech function	Sara	Laura	Danielle	Kathryn	Chris	Mark	Total
No of turns	2	10	9	4	4	6	35
No of moves	2	16	12	4	10	17	61
No of clauses	2	19	13	4	10	21	69
Opening:							
Attending							
Offer						1	1
Command		1			1		2
Statement: fact						1	1
Statement:opinion					1		1
Question:open:fact							
Question:closed:fact			1				1
Question:open:opinion							
Question:closed:opinion							
Total		***1***	***1***	***0***	***2***	***2***	***6***
Continue							
Monitor		3	1		1		5
Prolong:elaborate		1			1	4	6
Prolong:extend		1			1	3	5
Prolong:enhance		1	2			4	7
Append:elaborate		2	1			2	5
Append:extend		1					1
Append:enhance		1					1
Total		***10***	***4***	***0***	***3***	***13***	***30***
React:responding:supportive							
Develop:elaborate							
Develop:extend		1			***1***		2
Develop:enhance							
Engage							
Register							
Replay:accept							
Reply:comply							
Reply:agree	1	1	5	1	1	1	10
Reply:answer	1	1		1			3
Reply:acknowledge							
Reply:affirm			1	1	1		3
Total	***2***	***3***	***6***	***3***	***3***	***1***	***18***
React:responding:confronting							
Disengage							
Reply:decline							
Reply:non-comply							
Reply:disagree							
Reply:withold							
Reply:disavow							
Reply:contradict							
Total							0
React:rejoinder:supportive							
Track:check							
Track:confirm							
Track:clarify							
Track:probe					***1***		1
Response:resolve				1	***1***		2
Total				***1***	***2***		***3***
React:rejoinder;confronting							
Challenge:detach							
Challenge:rebound		1					1
Challenge: counter							
Response:unresolve:refute			1				1
Response:unresolve:re-challenge		1				1	2
Total		***2***	***1***			***1***	***4***

Conversational structure	Turn/ move	Speaker	Text (numbered for clauses)
O:I:statement fact	1a	L	(i)all of her points of view were like a sexist male
C:monitor	1b		(ii)weren't they really?
R:s:affirm	2	D	(i)yeah definitely
R:s:affirm	3	Ka	(i)yeah
A:elaborate	4a	L	(i)she wasn't like, well (ii)she was Margaret Thatcher
C:Monitor	4b		(iii) wasn't she?
R:s:affirm	5a	C	(i)Yes.
R:track:probe	5b		(ii) Is she dead yet?
R:s:resolve	6	Ka	(i)I think so
R:c:rebound	7	L	(i) not unfortunately
O:I:statement:fact	8a	C	(ii)she's gone quite quiet really
C:monitor	8b		(iii)hasn't she?
P:elaborate	8c		(iii) you don't hear much about her nowadays.
O:I:question:open:fact	8d		(iv) what is she ?
P:extend	8e		(v)Lady something or other
R:s:answer	9	L	(i)Baroness isn't she?
R:s:agree	10	S	(i)yeah
O:I:question:closed: opinion	11a	D	(i)do you think though that really she actually got to be prime minister
P:enhance	11b		(ii)because she was the first woman (iii)to actually go for it?
R:s:answer	12	Ka	(i)no
R:s:answer	13	S	(ii) no
R:rechallenge	14a	M	(i)I think she became prime minister
P:enhance	14b		(ii)because the conservatives realised
P:extend	14c		(iii)that if you messed with her
P:enhance	14d		(iv)she would probably slap you round the face
R:s:agree	15	C	(i)this is it
A:elaborate	16	M	(i)she (was scary
R:D:extend	17	C	(i)she ran the whole country
R:D:extend	18	L	(i)she was extremely powerful (ii) extremely powerful
R:s:agree	19	D	(i)umm
A:elaborate	20a	L	(i)she had a foot in all the right doors
C:monitor	20b		(ii)you know (everybody
R:s:agree	21	D	(i) yeah
A:extend	22a	L	(i)she had some kind of power over everybody.
P:elaborate	22b		(ii) If people didn't want to vote for her
P:extend	22c		(iii)but they found themselves having to really

	22d		(iv)because
P:enhance	23a	D	(i)not that much power
R:refute	23b		(ii)because she got kicked out
P:enhance	23c		(iii)didn't she? So
C:monitor	24	L	(i)it took a long time
R:re-challenge	25	D	(i)umm
R:s:agree	26	L	(i)she definitely had something on somebody
A:enhance			(ii)I think
R:s:resolve	27	C	(i)umm
O:command	28a	M	(i)to go back to what Shirley was saying though
P:elaborate	28b		(ii) about people being employed
P:enhance	28c		(iii)because it's the right thing to do
P:elaborate	28d		(iv) still happens in today's society.
R:s:agree	29	D	(i)it does yeah
O:statement:opinion	30a	M	(i)I mean (ii)if you go to Northern Ireland
P:elaborate	30b		(iii)because the British government has become so involved in this whole peace thing (iv)and makes such a thing about Protestant and Catholic,
P:extend	30c		(v)they have said that a certain percentage of any company's employees has to be such and such
R:s:agree	31	D	(i)that's ridiculous
R:s:agree	32	M	(i)and that is wrong
R:s:agree	33	L	(i)umm
R:s:agreee	34	Ka	(i)that is wrong
A:elaborate	35	D	(i)that's reverse discrimination
A:elaborate	36a	M	(i)it is discrimination
P:extend	36b		(ii)but apparently its not
P:enhance	36c		(iii) because it's a government policy (iv)that says that's how it's the way its got to be (v)so it still happens in today's society
P:elaborate	36d		(vi)all over the place